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JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND AESTHETICS

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The Present Volume felicitates the 80th Birth Day of
Professor Vinjamuri K. Chari,
A Founder Member of the Editorial Board
of *Journal of Comparative Literature & Aesthetics*

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Professor V. K. Chari

Vinjamuri (Vedanta) Krishnamachari was born into an Orthodox Brahmin family of Tamil origin on 28th November, 1924. The family, affiliated to the Rāmānuja Śrīvaiṣṇava sect settled on the banks of the Godavari now in Andhra Pradesh. Having spent the early years amidst this Vaiṣṇava community (*agrahara*) in which Sanskrit and Tamil religious poetry was very much taught as a part of this typical South Indian Temple culture, Chari traditionally inherited Sanskrit learning from his forefathers despite his schooling in the local English school. The war and independence came with a sea change in the traditional Indian culture that scattered Chari's family over the five continents and transformed Chari's ancestral home into ruins.

Chari graduated in both Sanskrit and English subsequently post-graduating in English at Banaras Hindu University. The doctoral dissertation that Chari wrote in Banaras was a comparative study of the mysticism of Whitman the American Transcendentalist in the light of Vedanta concepts and doctrines. U.C. Nag and T.R.V. Murty of Banaras along with Mahendranath Sircar of Calcutta were his supervisors. The dissertation was published by the Nebraska University Press under the title *Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism* (1964).

During his professional career Chari joined the Madhya Pradesh Educational Service and taught at the universities of Banaras, New York and Carleton University of Ottawa (Canada), wherefrom he retired in 1994. From comparative literature Chari then shifted to comparative literary theory and aesthetics contributing extensively on theoretical perspectives of the Sanskrit *Alaṅkāra śāstra* vis-à-vis their Western parallels during the last three decades of the twentieth century. The University of Hawaii Press published Chari's *Sanskrit Criticism* in 1990 that offers his comprehensive views on aspects of Sanskrit rhetorics where, he says, he finds his moorings. Apart from his contributions to different scholarly organs of international repute such as *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, British Journal of Aesthetics, Adyar Library Bulletin, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics,* Chari has been serving as an active member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* since its inception. Along with this illustrious intellectual pursuit Professor Chari has been a performing artist, an amateur dancer of the famous South Indian styles named Kathakali, Kuchipudi and Perini (Śiva dance), playing roles in Sanskrit dramas staged before the University and learned's conferences in Canada. Dancing continues to be a passion for Chari even today.

Chari writes:

> My studies in the ancient Sastras gave me a standpoint that I could defend and from which I could evaluate my acquired Western critical culture.

Viewing from this vantage point, I am not only convinced of the absolute sanity of the classical culture—shared by both Indian and Western traditions—but I find that much of what is going on in the world of art and art criticism today is a distraction and an aberration, and one that is inspired by the modern penchant for "making it new," as a result of which what is elemental and what is of perennial value is being lost sight of and an all-round dehumanization is taking place. But I yet believe that those of us who uphold the traditional classical norms must continue to hold to their own, even at the cost of being dubbed reactionaries, and not allow ourselves to be intimidated into submission.

When asked about his specific world view, Chari answers:

You ask me what my world view is. But I have none of any positive value. I believe that no world view, doctrine or philosophy of life is worth entertaining, in that every doctrine is a dogma and every view, just that—a *dṛṣṭi* or *ditti*. In this I am with the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* of the Ṛg Veda: "Who really knows? Who can tell when even the gods in heaven do not know!" We can at best bear witness to what goes on around and what goes on within ourselves, like the Upanisadic bird. The truth of this will strike you when you consider that nothing about the world will ever change, has ever changed since the time of the Mahābhārata—we still fight the same battles and are driven by the same passions. For all we know, we may be headed for the Yuganta! All our strivings—repeated endlessly over the aeons—and all our millennial visions "are such stuff as dreams are made of."

Picasso, Rushdie and the Fragmented Woman

DEBORAH WEAGEL

> The essential relation is therefore immediately the relation of *whole* and *parts*—the relation of reflected and immediate self-subsistence, so that both sides only are as at the same time reciprocally conditioning and presupposing each other.
>
> — Hegel's *Science of Logic* (513)

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) is acclaimed as one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century. According to *The Dictionary of Art,* he "was central in the development of the image of the modern artist. Episodes of his life were recounted in intimate detail, his comments on art were published and his working methods recorded on film" (712). He experimented with different artistic styles throughout his life and "adopted particular styles as a form of criticism" (725). Furthermore, he was one of the major figures that helped develop Cubism, described as "one of the most radical re-structurings of the way that a work of art constructs its meaning" (712). Some of his output was eclectic and comprised "fragments of different styles," and some "works of strikingly different appearance may date from the same moment" (725). Although Picasso is often associated with modernism, his work reflects elements of postmodernism as well.[1] In *Picasso et les femmes,* Ingrid Mössinger writes: "This simultaneous co-existence of different styles, found in so-called 'Post-Modernism,' was demonstrated by Picasso's work sixty years earlier" (10). She adds: "Many artists . . . recognized that Picasso was always ten steps ahead of the rest of them" (10).

Salman Rushdie (b. 1947), on the other hand, born more than a half century after Picasso, is often affiliated with postmodernism. His novel, *Midnight's Children,* is representative of a postmodern work in many respects. One salient aspect is the rewriting of a monumental time in world history: India's independence from Britain in 1947. In *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English,* it states:

> *Midnight's Children* exploits complex narrative techniques of allegory, fable, fantasy, and textual self-consciousness, coupled with detailed realism in the depiction of personal relationships and certain key historical events, to illuminate what, in Rushdie's view, has gone wrong in India since Independence, particularly attacking the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. (584)

Furthermore, Ferozo Jussawalla writes: "The unwieldy chaotic language of the large dialect passages in *Midnight's Children* attempts to be a reflection of the unwieldy chaotic form which in turn attempts to reflect the content, the chaotic history of India and Pakistan since independence" (40). The novel includes fragmentation which is found in both modern and postmodern works. In fact, fragmentation can be considered a common link between the two periods.

In *Midnight's Children,* Dr. Aadam Aziz falls in love with Naseem as she is presented

to him in fragments. The young woman's father, Mr. Ghani, arranges for two husky female servants to hold a large white sheet between Aadam, the doctor, and Naseem, the patient. A hole, "about seven inches in diameter" (19) has been cut out in the middle of the sheet. As Aadam approaches the sheet he asks, "Ghani Sahib, tell me how I am to examine her without looking at her?" Ghani explains, "You will kindly specify which portion of my daughter it is necessary to inspect. I will then issue her with my instructions to place the required segment against that hole which you see there. And so, in this fashion the thing may be achieved" (19). The first day, Naseem has a stomach ache, so Aziz first becomes acquainted with her stomach. As time progresses he is introduced to such parts as her ankle, toe, calf, hands, armpit, and so on, until he comes "to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts" (22). This "partitioned woman" becomes "glued together by his imagination" (22), and he becomes intoxicated by the beauty of her parts.

Both Picasso and Rushdie are intrigued with the fragmented woman in their work. Picasso is famous for his portrayal of women in bits and pieces presented from a variety of vantage points. In a sense, he anticipates and prepares the way for Rushdie who creates the character Naseem, a woman who is introduced to her future husband in pieces. Thus Picasso and Rushdie experience a symbiotic relationship in that the former sets the stage for the latter, and the latter further develops the work of the former. In this essay, I compare and contrast the depiction of the fragmented woman by both Picasso and Rushdie, and assert that the modernist experiments of Picasso anticipate the postmodernist writing of Rushdie, and that Rushdie's work furthers the work of Picasso.[2]

Pablo Picasso was instrumental in laying the groundwork for postmodernism. Fragmentation, a feature of both modernism and postmodernism, is one of the prominent features in many of his works, particularly his Cubist creations. Natasha Staller, in *A Sum of Destructions: Picasso's Cultures and the Creation of Cubism*, writes that "Picasso's Cubist images...are among the most magical, most mysterious, most playful, most moving and most epochal images that he or anyone else ever made" (1). Not only does one find styles that "war against each other," but purposeful fragmentation as well. Staller explains that "Cubist works shimmer with fragments—where a disembodied mustache or glimpse of guitar glints out of shadowy mists; where bodies, objects, the 'space' around them, and often the materials used to depict them—all are shattered into shards" (1).[3]

In her text, Staller explores Picasso's background, and discusses some of the influences of his early childhood. In a section of the book called "The Fetished Fragment," she writes: "Picasso, the future maker of a Cubist art of fragments, spent his first ten years in a culture that was fascinated, almost obsessed, with body parts—parts often believed to be charged with higher meaning" (19). In Málaga, Spain, for example, where Picasso lived as a young boy, Malagueños prayed to the remaining fragment of a late sixteenth-century statue of Christ, the holy head "with its dark brown skin, black beard and hair" (19).[4] Other holy relics important to Malagueños included body parts such as St. Justin Martyr's leg bone, St. Luis Obispo's back bone, and St. Sebastian's "arm" (19). Malagueños also prayed

to metal images of body parts called ex votos. The various parts, "arms, eyes, hands, breasts, legs, feet" (20), were displayed in the chapel, and usually hung from ribbon or nails.[5] Furthermore, body parts that were cut, particularly fingernails, were associated with superstitions. For example cutting fingernails on Friday would result in "bad luck, even insanity"; cutting them at night was affiliated with "the devil's work" (20). Staller explains: "Such body fragments belonged to the realm of the potent, the magical, the marvelous"(20).

Staller also points out that isolated body parts were prominent in two late 19th-century paintings by the artist Enrique Simonet y Lombardo (20-21). In his *Decapitation of St. Paul* (1887), which is housed in the Málagra Cathedral, St. Paul's head lies on the ground, apart from his body, after having been chopped off. In another painting, *The Autopsy* (1890), a doctor stands by the partially naked body of a dead woman lying on a table, and holds the heart he has removed from her body.[6] This work, which hangs in the Museo de Málaga, emphasizes and, in some ways celebrates, an individual body fragment. Although both paintings are representational, they anticipate the more radical and thorough fragmentation of the human body which takes place in the 20th century. The latter work, which includes a woman partially covered by a sheet who is being studied part by part by a doctor, also foreshadows Rushdie's Dr. Aziz who examines the fragments of Naseem's body through a perforated sheet.

Picasso, like Simonet and many other artists, features women in numerous paintings. Some of his works of women are representational and somewhat traditional. For example, an early work, *The Young Girl with Bare Feet* (1895), depicts a girl sitting in a chair. The youth is wearing a red dress and has a white cloth draped over her shoulders. Another painting, *Portrait of Benedetta Canals* (1905), features the face and upper torso of a woman in a tan dress. Dark-haired, she wears a black veil on her head and is positioned against a burnt orange background. Considerably later, in 1942, Picasso painted *Portrait of Dora Maar*, which is also somewhat representational. It focuses on the face and upper torso of a woman with reddish brown, shoulder-length hair. She is attired in a green and orange striped dress with a white collar, and is situated against a blue/black background. The features of the woman's face have been influenced by African art, but are relatively symmetrical and balanced.[7]

Picasso, however, is best known for his renditions of women who are fragmented, with asymmetrical facial features and body parts. In *The Visual Grammar of Pablo Picasso*, Enrique Mallen paraphrases Robert Rosenblum and writes that "impelled to an ever greater fragmentation of mass and a more consistently regularized vocabulary of arc and angles, Picasso will treat even the human figure with a coherence that finally confounded the organic and inorganic" (139). He explains further: "The fracturing of mass into overall faceting tends towards annihilating the integrity of the human form" (139). In *Woman with a Guitar* (*Ma Jolie*), painted in 1911-12, the female is presented in neutral tones and geometrical shapes that are so fragmented it is difficult to distinguish the human being from the guitar. Yet not all of his portrayals of women were equally fragmented. His *Woman*

with Pigeons (1930) depicts a woman sitting on a ladder whose face includes both a profile and two eyes as though viewed from the front. She appears to be reaching toward pigeons, revealing one side of her body, yet both breasts, presented as asymmetrical circles, are included. In a later work, *Seated Woman in a Yellow and Green Hat* (1962), Picasso portrays a woman created with geometrical shapes, yet unlike *Woman with a Guitar*, the artist uses bold colors and makes it fairly easy to see how the various parts and fragments fit together to form a human being.[8] Mössinger writes: "What characterizes Picasso's work, particularly his portrayals of women, is the refusal to accept limitations" (10). Through fragmentation, whether it be to completely annihilate the woman in geometric forms, or present her in bold asymmetrical sections from multiple yet simultaneous points of view, he broke the barriers and limitations of convention.

Five of Picasso's works of women in particular can be associated with Rushdie's scenes of Dr. Aziz and Naseem.[9] For example, his painting *Science and Charity* (1895-6) depicts a doctor examining a female patient lying in bed who is covered by both a sheet and blanket.[10] The sick woman is being offered something to drink by a female attendant, who holds a young child in one arm and a cup in the other hand. Although visual fragmentation is not evident in this early work by Picasso, the theme of a doctor examining a female patient covered by a sheet, with a woman standing nearby, anticipates Rushdie's portrayal of Aadam's examinations of Naseem while women servants oversee his work as they hold a sheet. In Picasso's painting, the sheet provides not only comfort and warmth to the woman who is ill, but also functions as a shield covering the female from the gaze of the male doctor.

Another work by Picasso, *The Painter and His Model* (1914), created almost twenty years later, during the time period he was producing Cubist works, is not particularly fragmented.[11] In this piece, a male artist observes his nude model whose body is partially covered by a white sheet. Although this is not a scene involving a medical examination, the woman's body is being meticulously observed by the trained male artist in a professional relationship. One point of interest regarding this painting is that the woman and the upper background directly behind the woman are presented in colors. The artist, the chair on which he sits, and the other objects in the room are rendered in black and white, and appear to be sketched rather than painted. The focal point is clearly the woman who stands holding a sheet around her thighs. In this case the sheet acts of the barrier between the male examiner and the nude woman, which is the case with Aadam's professional visits with Naseem.

In The Artist, His Model, Her Image, His Gaze, Karen L. Kleinfelder points out that the actual canvas can act as the divider, or 'sheet,' between the artist and his model.[12] She writes specifically of Picasso:

> Picasso's erection of the canvas barrier brings the figure of the antithesis into play . . . . The canvas as an upright boundary subdivides the spatial field, mapping out occupied territories, personalizing placement. Situated respectively on each side of the canvas-divide, the artist and model find

themselves assigned to opposite camps. But the presence of an obstacle also opens up the possibility of transgression. A foot extends beyond the easel legs, and the canvas threshold is trespassed. (72)

In Picasso's *Painter and Model* (4.12.64), a canvas separates the artist on the left side of the picture and the nude model on the right side. [See Figure 1] Kleinfelder writes of the "binary opposition that hinges on the bisecting canvas edge" (73). She explains:

> As the center of the composition, the canvas governs the structure, determining the play of elements within the total design. Pictured in profile as a partition, however, the centered canvas closes off the play it initially had opened up by blocking interaction; the canvas becomes the censor. It detaches and polarizes artist from model, paralleling their differences: man/ woman, active/passive, aged/youthful, clothed/naked, dark/light . . . . The prohibitive canvas barrier thus makes interplay between artist and model a taboo. (73)

In fact, even the written slash (/) between the specific binaries can be viewed as a metaphorical canvas or sheet. The white cloth in *Midnight's Children* which separates Aadam Aziz and Naseem makes a similar binary division, and also acts as a censor between male doctor and female patient.

Not only does Picasso construct a dividing line between artist and model, but in many works, he also presents the female in fragments. For example, in *Painter and Model* (7.2.64), the model on the other side of the canvas is portrayed in segregated parts. [See Figure 2] Kleinfelder writes of this particular work:

> . . . the figure of the model becomes a disassembly of anatomical parts, sprawling in all directions in chaotic disarray. Detached body parts acquire their own autonomy as the body mechanism goes haywire. A leg bent at the knee begins to look unfamiliar, even bizarre. The knee becomes a coiled spring that connects to an abnormal formation of a rounded heel with two prodding, tubular appendages for toes. The model's head assumes the form of a three-leaf clover encasing a long, slender nose over a tiny, tight-lipped mouth, with two large eyes attached as appendages. Her forehead is indicated by a protruding little orb on top that sprouts some scraggly hairs, looking more like a turnip than a brain-center. (77)

Kleinfelder discusses how the "straight and narrow" lines "of the artist's realm" counter "the chaotic outbreak of the model's" (78) area which contains curved, circular, and meandering lines. Picasso clearly separates the masculine, phallic space from the feminine, curvilinear domain with the canvas, which Kleinfelder says contains "both an erect phallus and an impenetrable hymen" (79). She writes: "Art, it would seem, can only intervene at this point of impasse, when union is not yet consummated and the model remains the 'still unravished bride'" (79). In *Midnight's Children*, the perforated sheet also serves as a barrier between the realm of male physician and female patient. It represents the erect phallus as it is held upright in a straight position, and feminine genitalia with the circular opening.

Naseem is the "still unravished bride" on the other side of the canvas.

Furthermore, in Picasso's famous *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), a relatively early work, the white sheets that partially cover nude, fragmented women act as the divider between the artist and model. The parts of these five partially shielded women are presented from various angles and perspectives.[13] Using predominantly geometric shapes, the viewer sees the back, breasts, arms, thighs, buttocks, knees, feet, and faces of various members of the female quintet, with some parts of the body being hidden by white sheets. Leon Battista Alberti writes that the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis "thought that he would not be able to find so much beauty as he was looking for in a single body . . . . He chose, therefore, the five most beautiful young girls from the youth of that land in order to draw from them whatever beauty is praised in a woman" (Qtd in Rosand 24). In a similar manner, Picasso provides the viewer with a variety of fragments from five different female images.[14]

In regard to *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, John Tytell writes that "Pablo Picasso's first major reinterpretation of traditional perspective in painting, is a harbinger of new form in the age of Einstein and Freud and a new way of seeing" (11). Picasso's work certainly corresponds with the development in other fields of study that occurred during his generation. Finding a new way of seeing and of viewing the world was significant throughout the twentieth century. His approach to *Les Demoiselles* was startling and revolutionary in the early part of the century. Robert Hughes writes:

> That Picasso could give empty space the same kind of distortion a sixteenth-century artist reserved for cloth with a body inside it points to the newness of *Les Desmoiselles*. What is solid? What is void? What is opaque, and what transparent? The questions that perspective and modeling were meant to answer are precisely the ones Picasso begs, or rather shoves aside, in this remarkable painting.(7)

Picasso presents five fragmented females in this painting which prepares the way for the partitioned woman in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

However, there is a difference between the women in Picasso's painting and the virgin Naseem in Rushdie's novel. Picasso wanted to name his piece, "The Avignon Brothel"(8). Although the white sheets in both cases cover the parts of the female, in the painting Picasso's sheets are intertwined with female prostitutes who invite men to participate in unsanctioned pleasure. The white cloths are similar in that they act as barriers that separate feminine and masculine domains. As long as they cover the woman, she remains separate from phallic penetration; it is only upon removal of the sheet that she becomes accessible. On the other hand, the sheet that separates Aadam and Naseem is almost ceremonial, and represents chastity, virtue, and honor.[15] The actual sheet is kept by the couple as a memento and reminder of their first meetings together, in which the groom was introduced to the bride piece by piece.

Picasso has prepared the way for the reader to imagine a partitioned woman who needs to be pieced together with the imagination. His rendering and presentation of women in parts existed for decades before Rushdie's novel was written and published. By the late

twentieth century, it was no longer revolutionary or unusual to view parts of a woman rather than the whole in a piece of work. Furthermore, not only could the perspective and viewpoint break out of the boundaries of tradition, but different perspectives could be presented simultaneously. So, when Rushdie introduces Naseem to the reader fragment by fragment, his presentation is not jolting or radical. On the contrary, in some ways, the purpose for the sheet between the doctor and patient, that of modesty, seems perhaps old-fashioned and extreme.

In Islam, however, chastity of women is of the utmost importance. Jamila Brijbhushan writes: "The excessive zeal with which women must be guarded and their virginity protected makes them an almost intolerable burden on the family which, naturally, makes it a point to find husbands for them and to hand them over to their in-laws as soon as possible" (47). This concern is strongly evident in *Midnight's Children* when Mr. Ghani goes to great measures to insure both the modesty and chastity of his daughter. Underlying the need for frequent doctor's visits was Mr. Ghani's desire to find a husband for Naseem. He had essentially chosen Aadam Aziz as a potential son-in-law, and manipulated the visits in such a way that his daughter was presented to her physician (suitor) in pieces. Her various aches and pains were staged to a large degree so the doctor would be introduced to the various fragments, one by one, so he would need to imagine the whole woman until she was eventually unveiled.

A sense of modesty among many Muslim women continues to exist in contemporary society. According to a case study of a 19-year-old Arabic woman who was recently examined at a Women's Health Clinic in the southeastern region of the United States, "the client was draped to provide maximum protection and modesty" (Scott 4-5). The following "Cultural Overview," was provided in the case study to help medical professionals interact with Muslim women with greater sensitivity:

> Muslim women are extremely modest. For this reason, they cover their bodies, heads, legs, and sometimes their faces. They are self-conscious about examination of body parts. Muslim female clients frequently request an all-female staff. A husband usually prefers to be with his wife while she is examined . . . . A woman's modesty (hijab), chastity, and warmth (no drafts) have to be considered in all that the nurse does for the client . . ." (4).

The young woman's skin, head, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, throat, neck, chest, abdomen, and genitalia were all checked. During her visit, "the client was reluctant to be touched" and politely removed the professional's "hand on examination of the thyroid, breasts, and abdomen" (6). On a subsequent visit, the client was "carefully draped and screened," and her "husband was asked to stay during the examination to help allay the client's anxiety"(9).

Women from a large variety of backgrounds, cultures, and religions typically visit doctor's offices throughout the United States. During an examination it is common for the female patient to remove part or all clothing and put on a loosely fitting paper or cloth garment. For a general exam, the physician respectfully checks the patient body part by body part. The covered areas are usually unveiled as needed and then quickly and gently

covered again. In the case of the contemporary Muslim woman described above, extra care was taken to help make her feel more comfortable and to show respect for her extreme modesty. Thus when one keeps this tradition of modesty in mind which is still practiced on various levels today, Naseem's father does not seem quite so overprotective.

As with the canvas, which partitions the space between the artist and his model, the white sheet between Aadam and Naseem acts as a divider between male/female, activity/passivity, and subject/object. This binary can be found in many traditional relationships between men and women. But it can also be taken a step further and represent colonial hegemony. Aadam, in a metaphorical sense, depicts the dominant culture, while Naseem portrays India, the subordinate country. In Indian society (and other cultures as well) there is a strong association between a woman, particularly a mother, and the country. In Midnight's Children, Rushdie writes: ". . . is not Mother India, Bharat-Mata, commonly thought of as a female?" (465). When Aadam observes his future wife (a future mother), Naseem, in parts, metaphorically he also sees the country, India.

In the essay, "Woman, Nation and Narration in *Midnight's Children*," Nalini Natarajan states: "Synecdoche, the imagination of a whole from its parts, essential to nation construction, also becomes the way woman is perceived in *Midnight's Children*" (400). Furthermore, in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee explains that in traditional scholarship "subject-centered reason . . . proclaims its own unity and homogeneity by declaring all other subjectivities as inadequate, fragmentary, and subordinate" (xi). Although Chatterjee finds value in the fragmentary and local, he acknowledges the more standard view.[16] In the case of *Midnight's Children*, Aadam, the professional, represents the subject viewing Mother India, the object, in her fragmented state. There is a similar relationship between most physicians and patients during a general physical examination, when the doctor, as a whole entity, analyzes his partially covered subject part by part.

In her Ph.D dissertation, "'Under Other Skies': Writing Gender, Nation and Diaspora," Susan Koshy writes that in many of Rushdie's works "A patriarchal history records the world of public affairs in which men are the main players; women are largely invisible or appear as auxiliary figures who may gain or manipulate power through their connections with men" (102-103). Rushdie clearly situates the woman on the other side of the white sheet, or canvas, in which she becomes the patient (model) to be examined (analyzed) by the male professional (master). Although Saleem Sinai, the narrator in *Midnight's Children*, "repeatedly invokes the centrality of women to (his)tory," Koshy points out that control and power are in the hands of the certain male characters. She writes: "Historical production remains within Saleem's control and is located within the patriarchal family, so that while many women may feature prominently in the events, continuities and legacies are established through the men" (107).[17] In many of Picasso's paintings, women are the focal point, but he is unquestionably the master who put them in their prominent place. Likewise, Rushdie has the power in his writing to manipulate female characters and give them precedence, but this is done within a predominantly masculine narrative and with many dominant male characters.

Thus there is a strong sense of subordination with regard to even the strongest women in the novel. Koshy explains that when Aadam first meets his future bride as "she stands naked behind the perforated sheet" (122), he is enamored by the beauty of her parts. However, "after their marriage disillusionment sets in. The rift between them develops with Aadam's insistence to Naseem when they make love, 'Only move, I mean, like a woman . . .' Aadam confronts her with a relentless standard against which she is forced to define herself; either she responds as he expects or she is not a woman" (122). Furthermore, Saleem is strongly associated with colonialism in that his biological father is the Englishman and colonialist, William Methwold. This inbred alliance suggests a double subordination of women: not only are they subject to men, fathers, and husbands, but they are also subject to the colonizer. Even in their postcolonial state, the memory of the English culture and life style lingers and maintains a domineering presence.[8]

In addition, M K Naik writes: "The 'perforated sheet' motif reappears in the third generation too" (67). The white sheet, or canvas, does not just separate Naseem from her male physician and future husband, but also segregates Amina Sinai's daughter (Naseem's granddaughter), Jamila, from the male gaze. Jamila is a gifted singer who is allowed by her parents to perform on stage as long as she is veiled. Ahmed Sinai, her father, says to Major Latif, the person who wants to make her famous, "Our daughter . . . is from a good family; but you want to put her on a stage in front of God knows how many strange men . . .?" (Rushdie 357). Thus Major Latif provides Jamila with "her famous, all-concealing, white silk chadar, the curtain or veil, heavily embroidered in gold brocade-work and religious calligraphy, behind which she sat demurely whenever she performed in public" (358). The elegant shield (sheet, canvas) is "held up by two tireless, muscular figures, also (but more simply) veiled from head to foot" who are said to be women, "but their sex was impossible to determine" (358). In the "very center" of Jamila's chadar, "the Major had cut a hole. Diameter: three inches. Circumference: embroidered in finest gold thread" (358-9). The family became famous through their daughter who "sang with her lips pressed against the brocaded aperture," and whom the public "glimpsed through a gold-and-white perforated sheet" (359).

Eventually Jamila is "invited to President House to sing," where she dazzles her audience as she performs veiled by the "perforated sheet" (360). President Ayub states: "Jamila daughter . . . your voice will be a sword for purity; it will be a weapon with which we shall cleanse men's souls," to which she responds, "The President's will is the voice of my heart" (360). Although the President admires her voice, which is significant piece and part of her, she acknowledges where the greater power lies: with the President (physician, artist). It is his will that she wishes to fulfill, and the success of his administration she desires to promote. Rushdie writes: "Through the hole in a perforated sheet, Jamila Singer dedicated herself to patriotism" (360-61). Thus, the sheet (canvas) once again separates the dominant male from the female who is his object of admiration. Furthermore, it is a male, Major Latif, who makes her career possible. Furthermore, Jamila's complete appearance needs to be imagined through the beauty of her voice, and she is not presented

to the public as a whole. Both Jamila and Naseem are representative of the veiled, fragmented woman in society who are pieced together by a male author.

Thus, in many of Picasso's works and in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the canvas or sheet often represents a separating mark made by man. Picasso erects the canvas prior to painting, and Naseem's father as well as Major Latif, both males, arrange for sheets to be held to protect the modesty of the women. In connection with this separation of masculine and feminine space, the feminine is frequently fragmented and presented in parts. So on one side of the shield is a whole male, and on the other side is a partitioned woman. While some current scholarship celebrates fragmentation, such as Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments*, there are scholars who do not view the whole as equal to its parts as parts. For example, Hegel writes:

> . . . although the whole is equal to the parts it is not equal to *them* as parts; the whole is reflected unity, but the parts constitute the determinate moment or the *otherness* of the unity and are the diverse manifold. The whole is not equal to them as this self-subsistent diversity, but to them *together*. The whole is, therefore, in the parts only equal to itself, and the equality of the whole and the parts expresses only the tautology that *the whole as whole* is equal not to the parts but to the *whole*. (516)

By presenting the woman in pieces, the man seems to disassemble her, thereby making her less equal. In *Midnight's Children*, Naseem becomes more powerful as she becomes more unified. Rushdie writes of Naseem, whom Aadam "had made the mistake of loving in fragments, and who was now unified and transmuted into the formidable figure she would always remain" (39-40). Yet even in this context, it is Rushdie, the male author, who ultimately controls and empowers her character.

In conclusion, the sense of the fragmentary, so prominent in *Midnight's Children*, is in many ways an extension of the fragmentation made famous by Cubist artists like Picasso. The geometric bits and pieces that were presented from multiple perspectives in Picasso's work, particularly the depiction of women, anticipated the fragmented Naseem (and Jamila) described in *Midnight's Children*. Therefore, creative artists such as Rushdie are indebted, to some degree, to their predecessors and past. Lyotard, for example, writes that the postmodern "is undoubtedly a part of the modern" (79). John McGowan explains: "Every distinguishing feature of postmodernism can be located in an era prior to our own" (587). He continues to say:

> Postmodernism begins to seem a rhetorical creation, a way of constructing a historical 'other' that allows us to define a desirable present by contrasting it to a past (or to denigrate the present for being inferior to the past) . . . . Postmodernism, then, is just part of the very complex rereading of history taking place in the current climate of a critical questioning of the Western tradition. (587)

Linda Hutcheon concurs that postmodernism includes "some sort of historical grounding, however ironized" (612).

Furthermore the boundary, wall, sheet, or canvas that segregates the male artist, physician, professional, president from the female object serves as a metaphor for relationships of power. The most salient of these are the male/female, artist/model, physician/patient, colonizer/colonized, and president/citizen binaries. Boundaries can be realigned or even demolished into fragments.[19] Binaries can be negotiated and mediated in a Hegelian sense, in which the thesis and antithesis (contradiction) result in a synthesis, or resolution. Hegel writes:

> Thus all oppositions that are assumed as fixed, as for example finite and infinite, individual and universal, are not in contradiction through, say, an external connection; on the contrary, as an examination of their nature has shown, they are in and for themselves a transition; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their Notion's own reflection.(833)

He also writes the "the first also is contained in the second, and the latter is the truth of the former" (834).

Kleinfelder writes: "With the removal of the intervening canvas, the way is cleared for the artist to approach his model directly" (88). The sheet, canvas, wall, (/), between modernism/postmodernism (or any binary) is weakened through fragmentation, which acts as both a common denominator and a mediator capable of bringing about a potential synthesis. Thus Picasso's fragmentation is one of the driving forces that weakens the wall between modernism and postmodernism, and Rushdie's woman in parts, in turn, also aids in the demolition of the wall between the two epochs. Furthermore, his fragmented female also confirms the geometric feminine forms in Picasso's pieces. Through fragmentation of the divider, the marriage of the bride and groom can be consummated, and produce offspring to represent parts of both sides. In this respect, fragments that are combined to create one whole, can potentially represent a synthesis, a unity, and a combination which is greater and more ideal than the left or right side of the sheet. Although there are times when boundaries are desirable and appropriate,[20] there are many instances in which they should be crushed to bits and pieces.[21]

Notes

[1]In his seminal text, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-François Lyotard explains the difference between modernism and postmodernism. He writes that "modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure" (81) He says, for example, that from a literary standpoint Proust and Joyce "both allude to something" in their work "which does not allow itself to be made present," and that this sense of allusion can be associated with the "aesthetic of the sublime" (80). Proust, however, "calls forth the unpresentable by means of a language unaltered in its syntax and vocabulary and of a writing which in many of its operators still belongs to the genre of novelistic narration" (80). Joyce, on the other hand, "allows the presentable to become perceptible in his writing itself, in the signifier. The whole range of available narrative and even stylistic operators is put into play without concern for the unity of the whole, and new operators are tried" (80). Thus the postmodern "puts forth the unpresentable in presentation itself" and "denies itself the

solace of good forms" (81).

[2]The association of Picasso and other writers can be found in essays such as Jane P. Bowers, "Experiment in Time and Process of Discovery: Picasso Paints Gertrude Stein; Gertrude Stein Makes Sentences" (1994); Laszlo K. Géfin, "So-shu and Picasso: Semiotic/Semantic Aspects of the Poundian Ideogram" (1992); Emma Kafalenos, "Embodiments of Shape: Cubes and Lines and Slender Gilded Thongs in Picasso, Duchamp and Robbe-Grillet" (1990); Max Halperen, "Neither Fish nor Flesh: Joyce as Picasso" (1988); Naomi Ritter, "Rilke, Picasso, and the Street Circus" (1982); and Renee Riese Hubert, "Apollinaire et Picasso" (1966).

[3]Staller also writes that Cubist works "raid raucous snatches of popular culture (scraps of sheet music, a Suze liquor label). They dare mix materials, such as metal, paint, wood, sand, and string, and they defiantly break down the boundaries between media" (1). She says they additionally "play with hermetic signs, multiple meanings, and metamorphoses" (1).

[4]The piece is known as *El Rostro Sagrado*, and is located at the Altar de la Virgen de los Reyes, in the Málaga Cathedral.

[5]Ex votos of this type can be found at the Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares in Málaga. See illustrations in Staller, page 20.

[6]Ibid., see both illustrations on page 21.

[7]See illustrations in *The Portable Picasso*, pages 14, 69, and 304, respectively.

[8]See illustrations in *The Portable Picasso*, pages 129, 222, and 380, respectively.

[9]This small selection is extracted from numerous possibilities.

[10]See illustration on page 15 in *The Portable Picasso*.

[11]Ibid., see illustration on page 142.

[12]It is interesting to note that Kleinfelder uses many postmodern sources to analyze her modernist subject, Picasso. She writes: "While my own line of reasoning may often draw from postmodernist sources, I am well aware that my subject is not postmodern in scope" (7). The fact the postmodern criticism works well in the examination of Picasso and his works, underscores my argument that Picasso has helped prepare the way for postmodernism and for Rushdie's fragmented Naseem.

[13]See illustration in *The Portable Picasso*, pages 104-105.

[14]In addition, Rosand writes that in Giacomo Franco's drawing manual from the Renaissance, *De excellentia et nobilitate delineationis libri duo*, fragments of the body are segregated for practice in drawing. So the presentation of the body in parts, as mentioned earlier in regard to some Spanish art, is not uncommon to different time periods or different cultures. A major difference, however, between Franco and Picasso is that of perspective. Artists of the Renaissance strove to produce work that was more representational and reflected more of a likeness to the bodily part. Picasso, on the other hand, threw perspective out of whack, and defied traditional rules and guidelines in many of his works.

[15]A white sheet in used ceremoniously in some religions and cultures during the first night a couple consummates their marriage. It is associated with chastity and purity, and some traditions require a bloody sheet to be displayed as proof of the bride's virginity.

[16]Some of the "fragments" Chatterjee discusses in his book in relation to India include, "The Nationalist Elite," "The Nation and Its Pasts," "The Nation and Its Women," "The Nation and Its Peasants," "The Nation and Its Outcasts," and "Communities and the Nation."

[17]Saleem in the "grandson" of Aadam and Naseem.

[18]See the chapter, "Methwold" (101-117), for example, in which some families continue to follow the schedule of Englishmen even after the latter have returned to their homeland.

[19]In June 2003, while in Germany to participate in a professional conference, I viewed some of the remnants of the famous Berlin Wall that once strictly divided the East from the West. The wall was demolished in 1989, and in 1990, Berlin became the capital of a unified Germany. The two distinct parts are now one greater whole due to the fragmentation of that border (canvas, sheet, shield). I purchased one of the fragments at the Mauer Museum in Berlin and display it in my home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is a symbol of the power of deconstruction (fragmentation) of barriers, and of reconstruction (unification) of the two sides of the divider.

[20]For example, in the case where a female patient is examined by a doctor, it would be unethical for

the physician to completely remove the sheet or shield which guards a woman's privacy and modesty. If the professional relationship leads to marriage, as it did in the case of Aadam and Saleem, then the cloth should be removed.

[23]I thank Feroza Jussawalla for general suggestions in regard to this essay, and for sharing some of her ideas regarding Muslim women, doctors, and the white sheet.

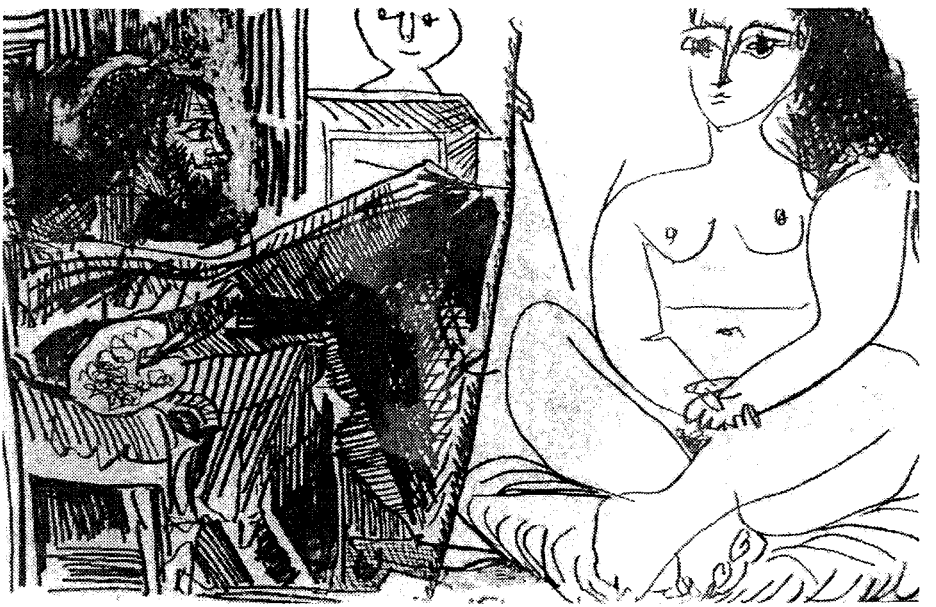

Figure 1. *Painter and Model.* Pablo Picasso. 4.12.64.
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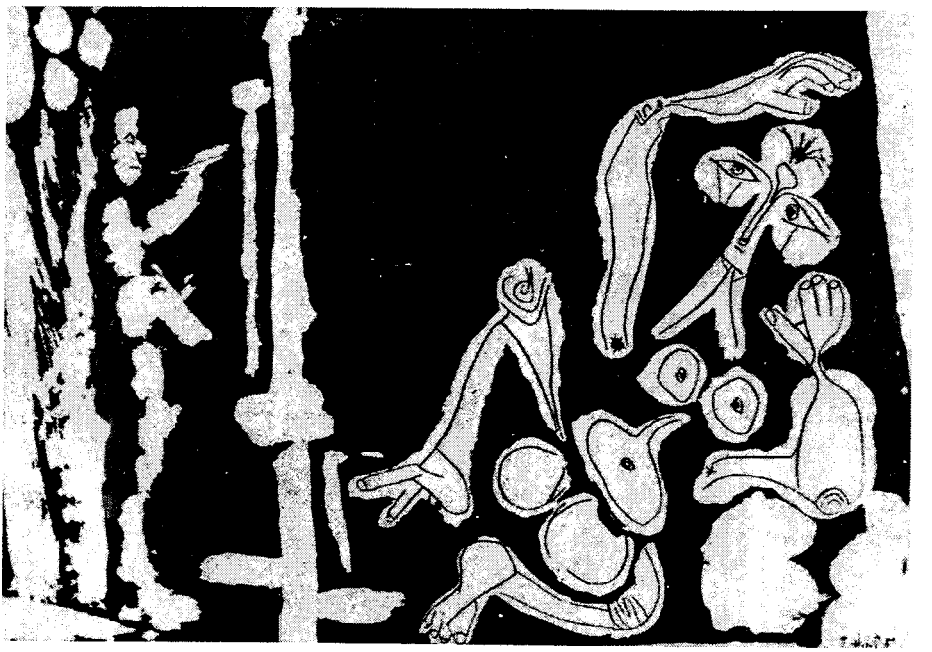

Figure 2. *Painter and Model.* Pablo Picasso. 7.2.64 I.
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Objective Aesthetic Experiences

PETER McCORMICK

One recurring philosophical problem about aesthetics and ethics concerns the connections between art works and the world. And one of the many questions that may arise in this connection is the following: are all aesthetic experiences of artistic work exclusively subjective experiences? In this paper I try to offer several considerations in support of the view that aesthetic experiences of what I have called elsewhere the "negative sublime" are not exclusively subjective; they are partly objective in a strong sense. In what sense?

Some aesthetic experiences of the negative sublime may include aspects that derive from elements in artistic works that embody strongly independent features of the actual world, including values. These aspects I will be calling "negative aesthetic values". My concluding suggestion will be that apprehending some of these aspects today may be required for rightly leading one's life.

The Hot Bone-House

Consider a beautiful passage from the conclusion of the Noble laureates Seamus Heaney's 1999 English translation of the *Beowulf* poem from the Old English or Anglo-Saxon (London, 1999). This Nordic epic, we are credibly told, "is about the monstrous, defeating it, being exhausted by it and then having to live on, physically and psychically exposed, in that exhausted aftermath" (from book jacket). Beowulf, after returning from two overwhelming and increasingly difficult struggles with the monstrous to liberate his Danish neighbours, and after reigning as their king for many years over his southern Swedish people, the Geats, Beowulf succeeds, but only after immensely demanding efforts, in defeating the monstrous a final time.

This time, however, the unthinkably powerful monstrous has arisen not from without, but from within the depths of his own peoples thousand-year history and his own brief life. And in this time the monstrous wounds Beowulf mortally. His grieving people burn his bod —his "bone-house," the poet calls it—on a funeral pyre. And a woman cries out horrific premonitions of the unthinkable sufferings now awaiting her and her people in the absence of their heroic defender. The passage runs:

> On a height [the great people] kindled the hugest of all
> funeral fires; fumes of woodsmoke
> billowed darkly up, the blaze roared
> and drowned out their weeping, wind died down
> and flames wrought havoc in the hot bone-house,
> burning it to the core. They were disconsolate
> and wailed aloud for their lord's decease.

A great woman too sang out in grief,
with her hair bound up she unburdened herself
of her worst fears, a wild litany
of nightmares and lament: her nation invaded,
enemies on the rampage, bodies in piles,
slavery and abasement. Heaven swallowed the smoke.

(11. 3143–55)

Now, much would need to be said about a climactic passage were we to come eventually to some not unsatisfactory understanding of its sense and significance. And here we are merely touching on what Heaney has called "a work of the greatest imaginative vitality, a masterpiece where the structuring of the tale is as elaborate as the beautiful contrivances of its language. Its narrative elements may belong to a previous age but as a work of art it lives in its own continuous present, equal to our knowledge of reality in the present time" (p. ix).

Nonetheless, even without the extraordinary scholarly resources that thorough understanding requires, some may read such works with appreciation. They read slowly, and reread slowly, the familiar details of men's fiery burials and women's dark lamentations. They bring to such details both what they perceive in the poem's language and their own histories at the end of this bloodiest of centuries, And, at some level of appreciation, they may find themselves attending not just to the specific, to the body as a "bone-house," but, as Aristotle would have it, to the universal, to the struggling and the dying and the grieving and the wild apprehendings. In other words, some readers in times like ours cannot overlook in this poem the fire's flames, wreaking "havoc... burning [the body] to the core." They cannot leave unnoticed today, the smoke "billow[ing] darkly up," nor can they today forget the "bodies in piles." And today they cannot refuse to leave unthought the fact, the utterly bare emptiness of the fact, that "heaven swallowed the smoke." They cannot; they may not.

Appreciating Literary Art works

So reading works like *Beowulf* may sometimes lead some readers today to genuine aesthetic experiences of a special kind. To say what kind we need a story. Here is one such story, not of course the only story and one in which parts may prove false. but one I think is still helpful. Generally, we may agree that our aesthetic appreciations of some works of art, especially of literary works of art, fill out concretely what these works necessarily leave undetermined. In particular, we might say that such filling out or "completion" or "concretization" of the physical artistic work is the transformation of that artistic work into one kind of international object we sometimes call an "art work." Our appreciation of this art work in an aesthetic experience specifies the art work as intentional object into an artwork of an individuated aesthetic object.

Now, the construction of any specific aesthetic object very often comes about exclusively as a function of our merely subjective associations with features of the antecedently completed or concretized art work. That is, sometimes we fill out cognitively

the artistic work, a material object such as the text of a poem like *Beowulf*, thus making of the artistic work a completed art work—and in our imaginative interactions with the completed art work, an aesthetic object. At other times, however, just when we allow our cognitive interactions with the artistic work to be mainly guided and constrained in the construction of the concretized art work by both the artistic work's objective material features as well as by our own objective historical experiences, the resulting art work is strongly determined by these independent objective features. When, in turn, we go on to have an aesthetic appreciation of such an art work in our imaginative interactions with the completed art work in the construction of related aesthetic objects, some central aspects of these aesthetic objects reflect objective marks of those strongly determined independent objective features of both the artistic work and the concretized art work.

So some strongly independent features of the artistic work, independent, that is, of both our thinking and our speaking about it, can constrain and control the concretization of certain objective features in the completion of the art work. Further, they can reinforce those objective features in the subject's subsequent construction of certain aspects of the relevant aesthetic objects that the subject constitutes in aesthetic experience.

The Negative Sublime

In some such cases, these imaginative interactions can lead to the appearance of what I have argued elsewhere is a "negative sublime." The negative sublime may be taken here as being an inexorable and endlessly repeated moment of having to strive and having to fail to articulate rationally the unthinkable magnitudes of innocent suffering—the extent of it (the immensities of the grieving woman's premonitions), and the unthinkable magnitudes of overwhelming evil—the power of it (the immensity of the monstrous overwhelming even the heroic).

This idea of a negative sublime unfolds from Kant's talk in the *Critique of Judgement* of both a dynamic and a mathematical sublime. Kant, of course, was speaking of the sublime in the context of nature and not of art. Moreover, Kant himself nowhere speaks about a negative sublime. In 1790, Kant leaves aside both his 1760's precritical distinction of the sublime into the noble, the splendid, and the terrifying, and his 1780's talk in his ethical writings of only the moral being sublime in favour of a distinction between the mathematical and the dynamical sublime. But this late discussion has remained seriously problematic.

Still, Kant's discussions of just those mental situations when experiences of pleasure and displeasure succeed each other incessantly, like the short-circuiting of the optic nerve when we look at Op-Art paintings, and when reason continues vainly to try to overstep the limits of understanding, like attempting to pass a border crossing in Kosovo, are challenging. Even more challenging is Kant's central claim that just this combination of the elements of the sublime must provoke in the reflective subject the realization of what Kant calls mysteriously the "supersensible" character of the mind itself. These Kantian speculations are difficult. But I think they are pertinent for better understanding the structure of certain aesthetic experiences like our appreciations of the *Beowulf* poet's literary representations of the overwhelming magnitudes of both suffering and evil.

Perhaps I may now summarize these initial remarks about artistic works, their

concretizations as art works, and their constructions as aesthetic objects as follows. When appreciating some artistic literary works today, some readers may come to experience, through their individual concretization of the objective features of these artistic works in the contexts of their own objective historical experiences at the beginning of this new century, a negative sublime, a realization of the supersensible character of mind in the ineluctable and necessarily ever-frustrated attempts to understand what reason can neither apprehend nor ignore—the overwhelming extent of suffering and evil in times like ours. But such a story is, as I have already indicated, not without problems. One serious problem is the story's including what seems to be an obscurely subjective aspect only of a fuller aesthetic experience. I would put this problem in the form of a question: What exactly might be said to generate this experience of a negative sublime, not, as Kant would have it, just on the side of the reader, but from the side of the aesthetic object that the reader has constituted? I turn now to consider this question, but only after beginning, again concretely, with another passage from *Beowulf*.

"Doomed" and "Mysterious"

Before the Geats of southern Sweden had consigned Beowulf's body to the pyre, a messenger had brought them news of Beowulf's final struggle with the monstrous and of Beowulf's victory in his defeat, his fated but mysterious death. The messenger, like the grieving women later, had also foretold future wars now that the heroic king was dead and his people left defenseless. In the following passage the messenger ends his speech with a sober tribute to Beowulf; then the *Beowulf* poet himself interjects a brief comment:

"We must hurry now
to take a last look at the king
and launch him, lord and lavisher of rings,
on the funeral road. His royal pyre
will melt no small amount of gold:
heaped there in a hoard, it was bought at heavy cost,
and that pile of rings he paid for at the end
with his own life will go up with the flame,
be furled in fire: treasure no follower
will wear in his memory, nor lovely woman
link and attach as a torque around her neck—
but often, repeatedly, in the path of exile
now that their leader's laugh is silenced,
dawn—cold to the touch will be taken down
and waved on high: the swept harp
darkly over the doomed will have news,
tidings for the eagle of how he hooked and ate,
how he and the wolf made short work of the dead."

. . . . . .

Famous for his deeds
a warrior may be, but it remains a mystery

where his life will end, when he may no longer
dwell in the mead hall among his own.
So it was with Beowulf, when he faced the cruelty
and cunning of the mound-guard. He himself was ignorant
of how his departure from the world would happen."
(11.2977-27; 3062-75)

Let me sketch one only of the salient features of this important passage. This feature I would propose as an instance of the kind of objective constraints an artistic work and its concretized art work may exercise over the usual exclusively subjective construction of a related aesthetic object. The feature I wish to highlight is the objective semantic opposition between two expressions in the material text. This is the feature that can set up in the minds of certain readers a semantic indeterminacy of conflicting sense and significance of the two expressions in the text.

Recall two of the lines above from the messenger's speech—"the eagle winging darkly over the doomed"—and one from the poet's interjection — "it remains a mystery where [a warrior's] life will end." Then focus briefly on the contrasted expression, "doomed" and "mystery." The first expression, "doomed," is linked with difficult matter, with fate, fatality, and destiny. All these dark matters are an integral part of the poem's strongly pagan, non-Christian cultural background. Thus as readers, we are to understand that those whom this nordic culture most esteems as having embodied and fulfilled its most basic culture ideals are warriors—they are, clearly, "warrior-heroes." Their deeds are destined; their deeds are liberating and enriching; and their deaths are "doomed." The culture is a tragic culture and some of its most representative works, such as but not only the *Beowulf* poem, are tragic works of high literary art.

The second expression, "mystery," is also linked with difficult matters, with election, providence, and redemption. And all these dark matters are also an integral part of the poem's cultural background, but of its partly Christian and not just pagan background. Thus as readers, we are also to understand that those whom this culture most esteems are indeed warriors—but they are also, obscurely, "warrior-saints." Their deeds are providential; their deeds are redemptive and vicarious; and their deaths are "mysterious." The culture is not just a tragic culture and works like the *Beowulf* poem are not just tragic works of high literary art.

Now, as I have indicated, appreciating such works in an aesthetic experience may involve no more than constructing an aesthetic object of our appreciation on no other grounds than subjective associations only. In this sense, the resultant aesthetic object itself is exclusively a subjective phenomenon. But an aesthetic object may also include certain aspects strongly linked to objective elements and hence be not exclusively a subjective phenomenon. For aesthetic appreciation may also involve allowing the construction of an aesthetic object to proceed partly in conformity with certain objective constraints present in the art work.

Here, we may say that an aesthetic appreciation of this complex passage from the

Beowulf poem may result from the construction of an aesthetic object that is more than merely subjective. For such a construction may build into the aesthetic object features that correspond to and/or cohere with definite and determinate objective features of the artistic work. That is, features of the aesthetic object may reflect the fact that objective linguistic structures of the poem—its diction, its syntax, and its semantics—turn a round not a single but a twofold discourse, both non-Christian and Christian, whose continuing pragmatic oppositions generate bearers of a deep pathos in the aesthetic experience itself.

When, as here, some may come to have an aesthetic experience that is partly objective in this sense, then the pathos of that experience may be understood as arising from certain aspects of the aesthetic object, aspects that I propose to call "negative aesthetic value." However, to grasp the sense I wish to give this expression, this English barbarism, we need several distinctions.

Negative Aesthetic Values

The complex expression, "negative aesthetic value," may refer to several quite different situations or states of affairs: First, the expression may designate an instance of a particular *negative,* as opposed to positive, artistic value. Thus this first distinction turns on the opposition between positive and negative. The general idea is that some features of the artistic work, in this case the text, may be viewed or regarded as either good or positive features (the text is complete), or as bad or negative features (the text is, let's say in OE kennings, "mouse-munched"), independently of any subsequent evaluation one might make of these features.

But the experience "negative aesthetic value" may also designate an instance of a particular negative *aesthetic* rather than artistic value. Thus this second distinction turns on the opposition not between positive and negative, but between artistic and aesthetic value. Although one may draw such a distinction in many ways, we can satisfy our present purposes by taking this distinction as holding between the material work itself, the "artistic work" (here the text of the *Beowulf* poem), and the concretization of the artistic work, the "artwork," (here a reader's intentional object of the material work). The value at issue here is the intrinsic value of the reader's intentional object, and not the intrinsic value of the material work.

What about the third term in the polyvalent expression, "negative aesthetic *value*?" Now philosophers continue to have persistent difficulties with winning argued consensus in defining something so general as what the word "value" may or may designate. Here, three remarks should suffice: First, we may agree that there appear to be many different kinds of value: physical values, intellectual values, moral values, artistic and aesthetic values, to name but a few. These value kinds moreover appear to be ranged in hierarchies of importance. And, third, artistic and aesthetic values appear to be centrally related to whatever we may affirm or deny about the bearers of positive and negative qualities of works of art and the intentional objects art appreciators may make of them. In this context let us then say that the word "value" designates just what the bearers of negative aesthetic features present in the aesthetic objects some art appreciators construct in strong conformity

and coherence with their intentional concretizations of material artistic works.

With at least these distinctions on hand, I want now to stipulate what we may understand when we use the richly ambiguous expression "negative aesthetic value" in connection with experiences of a negative sublime. Let such an expression designate just what is presented to the mind of an appreciator by objectively constituted bearers of negatively charged aspects of specific aesthetic objects. In such cases, the appreciator neither makes negative judgements about aesthetic values nor entertains negative feelings about aesthetic values, but comes to have negative beliefs about not just aesthetic but about moral matters as well, beliefs about what one can neither know nor even think, for example, beliefs that the immensities of both the magnitudes of suffering and the magnitudes of the evils that cause suffering cannot be thought. That is, what gives rise to experiences of the negative sublime are features of the aesthetic object—negative aesthetic values—some merely subjective and some genuinely objective in the sense of those constructed according to constructed according to constraints imposed by objective features of the intentional concretization and the artistic object. Such negative aesthetic values may generate beliefs about what, at least on Kantian grounds, we may only hope for—not just the existence of a self or the immortality of the soul or the existence of God, but the rational capacities to think enough.

I want to summarize now these remarks about the negative sublime and negative aesthetic values as follows. Some readers, I have been saying, may come to have an aesthetic experience of literary works of art like *Beowulf* and so many others, an experience that sometimes is not exclusively subjective but objective as well. They do so when they allow their imaginative construction of aesthetic objects to be strongly guided by certain objective features of the concretized artistic work itself. When the negative aesthetic values within such aesthetic experiences give rise to an experience of a negative sublime, then such an experience cannot be characterized as being exclusively subjective. Indeed, the apparently and merely subjective pathos of such aesthetic experience may point unmistakably, in times like ours, to what can only be the deep and actual pathos of things.

A Nothing that is a Something

Let us, return a last time to the *Beowulf* poem. Beowulf died. Perhaps we may say that Beowulf died in a final battle with the monstrous? Earlier, the poet presented the battle with the related guises, one male and the other, its mother, female, the second even more overwhelming than the first. Each time the monstrous assailed Beowulf in the country of his Danish neighborhood. Each time Beowulf prevailed. But now the poet figures the monstrous in the guise of something neither male nor female but of something preternatural, of something arising perhaps from Beowulf's own warrior, kingly, and heroic self.

The monstrous now challenges Beowulf in the guise of the mythical "fire-dragon," a fiery serpent, an all-consuming fire, a reddish void. And although Beowulf overcomes the monstrous one last time, this time the monstrous, at once fatally and mysteriously, destroys its own destroyer. In destroying Beowulf, the monstrous succeeds in consigning the dead hero's own people, unlike the Danes, defenselessly to their harrowing premonitions

and their echoing lamentations.

But what exactly is this monstrous thing, this all-consuming fire, this reddish void, this immensely imagined nothingness that seems to be an actual something? Here is a last passage where the *Beowulf* poet mythically describes the monstrous in the preternatural strangeness of its overwhelming power, destructiveness, and death-dealings.

Beowulf the king
had indeed met with a marvelous death.
But what they saw first was far stranger:
the serpent on the ground, gruesome and vile,
lying facing him. The fire-dragon
was scaresomely burnt, scorched all colours.
From head to tail, his entire length
was fifty feet. He had shimmered forth
on the night air once, then winged back
down to his den; but death owned him now,
he would never enter his earth-gallery again.
Beside him stood pitchers and piled-up dishes,
silent flagons, precious swords
eaten through with rust, ranged as they had been
while they waited their thousand winters underground.
That huge cache, gold inherited
From an ancient race, was under a spell—
which meant no one was ever permitted
to enter the ring-hall unless God Himself,
mankind's keeper, True King of Triumphs,
allowed some person pleasing to him—
and in His eyes worthy—to open the hoard.
What came about brought to nothing
the hopes of the one who had wrongly hidden
riches under the rock face. First the dragon slew
that man among men, who in turn made fierce amends
and settled the feud. (11. 3036–62)

Art, Negation, and Life

Now, in the light of our various experiences with work like this, I have been suggesting that rightly appreciating some artistic works today, may involve apprehending certain abstract features of aesthetic objects. These features I have called, barbarously, "negative aesthetic values." When rightly apprehended, they may provoke experiences of a negative sublime. And such experiences may be more than exclusively subjective. Just because they may be guided and constrained by independent features of the material artistic works that generate their intentional concretizations and guide their aesthetic constructions, such experiences of a negative sublime can also be genuinely objective. So much for a

suggestion.

However, I would also like to offer one further thought for discussion, a sunrise about art, negation, and life in the form of three queries. Could living rightly sometimes require appreciating negative aesthetic values? That is, could it be the case that part of what rightly living our lives entails today may sometimes require rightly apprehending just those specific features of certain aesthetic objects that I have been calling here "negative aesthetic values"? And could failing to appreciate negative aesthetic values sometimes entail failing to live rightly? That is, could it also be the case that without such apprehensions in our ongoing imaginative interactions with some works of art, we can only remain ever unable to catch up into our lives, as we ought to, at least some of our own times' still unbearable burdens—the unthinkable sufferings and the unthinkable evils?

You might well reply, of course, that just these aesthetic apprehensions are hopelessly inconsequential. "In their subjective yet—even granted—partly objective aspects," you might say, "such reveries are ever wispily receding into indeterminable futures of persons and peoples, may be dark apprehendings of a kind of nothing, if you insist, but then again may be no more than the dark insubstantial stuff of ordinary nightmares, or the dark side effect of diminishing neurotransmitters in the synaptic clefts, or the dark swirlings only of night and fog." Of "night and fog," I would then repeat, of "Nacht and Nebel." And I would have to return to my hunch and ask again: Could living rightly today require not just aesthetically appreciating but cognitively apprehending what even objective aesthetic experiences of a negative sublime can never warrant but only intimate? That is, could it be the case that what we can apprehend even if only darkly, like Beowulf darkly apprehending the monstrous in its endless guises, is finally not a nothing at all, not a fiery phantasmagoria of any fairy-tale dragon, not a mythical monster, not any psychic artifact of a hormonal imbalance or of a spiritual self-deception, but a something? Could we be apprehending in some aesthetic experiences of a negative sublime the definite, determined, and overwhelming actuality of something truly monstrous, of an objective and still unthinkable evil?

But all this may be just a bit much; on this view, *Beowulf* seems to be about a lot, a whole lot.

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The Strata Model in Poetics (Schichtenpoetik)[1]

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Summary

Here, for the first time in English, one of the most fertile models in the theory of art and literature is being presented and explained: the strata model. At the same time, the theories of its most important proponents (Nicolai Hartman and Roman Ingarden) are being reconciled with each other. Lastly, the advantages of the strata model are demonstrated by a clarification of open questions: 1. How can *art* be differentiated ontologically from other objects? 2. How can the various *kinds* of art be defined ontologically? 3. In what relationship does the strata model stand to Marxist art theory? 4. How can the concepts of *structure*, *genre*, and Aristotle's *Three Unities* be explained in view of the strata model? 5. How do "artistic values" differ from "aesthetic values"? 6. Where can literary values be located within the strata model?

Zusammenfassung

Hier wird zum ersten Mal in englischer Sprache eines der fruchtbarsten Denkmodelle der Kunst- und Literaturwissenschaft vorgestellt und erläutert. Zugleich werden die Anschauungen seiner wichtigsten Vordenker (Nicolai Hartmann und Roman Ingarden) miteinander in Einklang gebracht. Danach werden Vorteile des Schichten-Modells exemplarisch an der Klärung von einigen noch immer offenen Fragen demonstriert: 1. Wodurch unterscheidet sich Kunst ontologisch von anderen Objekten? 2. Wie lassen sich die Kunstarten ontologisch voneinander abgrenzen? 3. Wie verhält sich das Schichtenmodell zur marxistischen Literaturtheorie? 4. Wie verhalten sich der Strukturbegriff, der Gattungsbegriff und die "drei Einheiten" des Aristoteles zum Schichtenmodell? 5. Wodurch unterscheidet sich "künstlerischer" von "ästhetischem" Wert? 6. Wo sind literarische Werte im Schichtenmodell anzusiedeln?

Keywords: Poetics, Aesthetics, Strata Model, Schichtenmodell, N. Hartmann, R. Ingarden

I. The Strata Model

New concepts and models of thinking can precipitate new insights by giving a fresh direction to our observations and showing us what to look for. One very productive model for viewing complex phenomena in literature is the "strata" concept, a way of distinguishing in literature layers or levels, similar to geological strata. To our knowledge, **Plato**[2] was the first to use a strata model for his description of the psychological functions of man, in which he uses the metaphor of a chariot driver. Since Romanticism we encounter traces of strata models more frequently, especially in psychology. **Sigmund Freud**[3] made them famous with his strata of the id, the ego, and the superego. He realized, of course, that such spatial models are imperfect means for describing psychological processes and relationships. The German philosopher, **Max Scheler,**[4] used the model in

1916 for a description of emotional life. His pupil, **Nicolai Hartmann,**[5] finally built a complete ontological, ethical, and aesthetic system of philosophy on the strata model. In addition to depth psychology and philosophy, strata models have been used successfully in other areas. In 1938, **Erich Rothacker**[6] gave us a summary of their application to anthropology and characterology. Many other disciplines (like brain physiology, biology, and pedagogy) also adopted the strata model.[7] For the analysis of literature in particular, it was first used in large scale by **Roman Ingarden,**[8] the Polish philosopher and pupil of the founder of Phenomenology, **Edmund Husserl.**[9]

The application of a strata model to the analysis of literature is mainly pragmatically motivated. The literary scholar or the interpreter of literature is less concerned with philosophical insights than with an objective comprehension of the literary work. Beyond that, s/he wishes to understand other, mainly psychological, phenomena observable within a literary context. Thus strata poetics is justified as a tool of cognition and systematization only insofar as it yields insights that could not have been gained otherwise. The philosophical dispute as to the justification of strata models as such will be of no concern in this paper.

Strata models are systems of categories that *we* project upon phenomena in order to make sense of them. They correspond to a synthetic mode of thinking, which attempts to strike a balance between the observation of universal laws and the description of individual characteristics. Like most concepts in the humanities, they do not limit, but rather serve to accentuate observed phenomena. They group together certain aspects of literature into unified strata of systems which can be said to stand in a relation to one another comparable to that of psychological strata within the human personality.

The correspondence between the stratification of the human personality and that of its products, especially the work of art, can be understood in psychological terms: when an artist creates a work of art, he does so under the influence of the various strata of his personality. These strata can participate in differing degrees (creating more "emotional" or "cerebral" art, for example). In the process of reception, corresponding psychological strata in the audience will resonate in varying degrees (e.g., the work of art will have a mainly "emotional" or "cerebral" impact). In this way it can be explained that not all art appeals equally to any receiver. A degree of "readiness" granted by a correspondence in the strata-structure between artist, work of art, and receiver will promote the reception of art.

Because of the comparability of the stratification of the literary work of art on the one hand, and of the personality of the poet and of the receiver on the other, strata models point beyond the literary realm. If strata are to be viewed as categories applicable to both the human personality *and* its products, they must correspond to ontological as well as to psychological laws.

II. Hartmann and Ingarden

Hartmann and Ingarden are the only two thinkers who applied strata models systematically to aesthetic phenomena, but neither compared his findings with the other's in a constructive manner.[10]

While systematic studies of the "ambiance" of literary works and of certain

relationships in style between various arts gained more and more acceptance, a *theoretical* inquiry into *ontological* questions as to the different modes of existence of various forms of art was generally avoided. However, it is only in comparison to the ontological structure of *other* kinds of art (that is, their varying "stratification") that literature can be *fully* understood.

Roman Ingarden has had a notable impact on literary theory, starting with the so called "immanent interpretation" school[11] in Germany following World War II and continuing in some American publications that look back to Husserl's phenomenology and its usefulness for the cognition of literature.[12] Nicolai Hartmann, on the other hand, seems to be forgotten for the time being.[13] His works on ethics are known to some specialists in religion, but his theories of aesthetics, based on the same ontological strata model, seem to be widely unknown. Even works in cultural anthropology that use the same model, or a very similar one, mention him only sparingly or not at all. Considering the importance of his basic premises and the richness of his observations, this is an injustice and should be corrected.

The attacks that were occasionally aimed at Hartmann's *general* ontology should not apply to his aesthetics: Since, according to him, the aesthetic object exists only for the recipient of art (contrary to the object of cognition), a discussion of Hartmann's "realistic ontology" and its epistemological assumptions[14] can be here omitted. Neither should we lament the somewhat scarce treatment of societal determinants, which **Georg Lukacs**,[15] who otherwise thinks highly of Hartmann, accuses him of. For an aesthetics, which understands itself as an ontology of art, societal factors belong only in so far to the work of art as they have been *integrated* into it, just as do psychological and philosophical factors. They certainly become part of the strata of the work described by Hartmann.

In spite of their very different reception, Hartmann and Ingarden have much in common[16]: They both stood in the middle of the idealism-realism controversy, and both decided in favor of realism by insisting that epistemology would have to be re-constructed out of ontology, and not vice versa. That is in Hartmann's case surprising, since it meant opposing the German idealistic tradition.[17] For Ingarden, this decision has been explained with the influence by the Polish analytical school, from which he came.[18] Both were influenced by **Scheler** as well as by **Husserl**'s phenomenology. Both, however, did not follow the transcendental idealism of the later Husserl (and even less **Heidegger**'s existentialism), but rather insisted on a patiently detailed analysis of existing objects (to which both counted art objects), that is to say, on a kind of phenomenological realism.

Both saw the work of art as an "intentional object" (Ingarden's term), based in reality and therefore lasting, but depending on the creative act of the author as well as on the act of reception by the audience. Both saw it mainly as a "stratified object" and both saw the problems in using such special metaphors. Lastly, both saw the relationship between the general ontological strata model and that specifically focused on literature. Hartmann, however, much more so than Ingarden, and that is, where their differences start:

One of the first problems one encounters in comparing these two attempts at a

stratified theory of art is whether one should design *individual* strata models for each art (music, painting, sculpture, literature, etc.) or, instead, one comprehensive model accommodating *all* of them. The former method was used by Ingarden whereas Hartmann used one comprehensive model.[19] It seems, however, that one of the greatest benefits of "Strata aesthetics", namely the possibility of comparing, describing, and defining the arts according to the way they *use* the available strata, would be lost if we used different models. For the purpose of comparative analysis *one* comprehensive system serves us better than many since, as stated previously, strata models are merely systems of categories, which we project upon phenomena in order to better distinguish them.

Such a unified system should also be based on the *ontological* strata model, encompassing inorganic, organic, emotional, and spiritual levels of existence in the world, since works of art are anchored in reality. We project the same categories simultaneously on art as well as on its surrounding reality. By using the same strata, we are enabled to compare art objects with other objects in ontological terms. The simple division into four levels of existence (material, biological, psychological, and intellectual, or whatever they may be called) can be further subdivided for aesthetic considerations, but *its sequence cannot be changed.* This claim may be justified by the following quotation from Hartmann: "The same strata that could be shown in the real world can also be found in the work of art and have to be run through by the spectator: first a material level (in the work of art, probably two), then one of life[lyness], then one of emotion, and finally a spiritual one."[20]

Another reason for following Hartmann in this respect is the fact that Ingarden, in contrast to Hartmann, finds his strata simply by a phenomenological analysis of the arts. In Ingarden's later book, *The Recognition of the Literary Work of Art,*[21] he describes the ways in which we realize the various strata. However, he never goes so far as to demonstrate points of *correspondence* between the strata in the personality structure of the artist and the receiver on the one hand, and the aesthetical structure of the work of art on the other hand. One reason for this is that Ingarden, at least officially, was not interested in the *psychological* aspects of literature. He also did not apply strata models to human beings, which had been the main concern of psychology and anthropology for quite a while, as best demonstrated by Rothacker's book. Rothacker even indicated points of correspondence in strata between human beings and their world of experience as stated in the following quote: "... substantial strata, characterized by autonomous laws, correspond to their correlated 'environments' ... zones of meaning, aimed only at them, which they derive from reality according to their intrinsic organization, and which offer them stimulation."[22] If we consider that not only art but also nature, and even inanimate environments can provide us with an aesthetic experience, we can better understand Rothacker's meaning. "Manipulated" nature or environments (such as gardens, flower arrangements, or architecture) form a transition from art to "real" (or un-manipulated) nature.

Hartmann, as mentioned before, bases his complete ontology on a strata model. This allows him to see the work of art as "just another" stratified object. Granted, this object may have a more complex stratification than any other kind, but nevertheless it is

based on the ontological model. We will later see that this enables him and us to more clearly define so far unexplained phenomena through the use of points of correspondence in the particular strata between author, receiver, the work of art itself, and the world in which it participates.[23] In this way, we attain a system whereby the strata are connected in two directions, namely "from the bottom up" (each stratum is *supported* ontologically by the one "below", its existence made ontologically possible by the one beneath it) and "from the top down" (each stratum is structurally *determined* by the one above it).

We cannot detail here the other problems connected with establishing a model of this kind.[24] It suffices to state that one of Ingarden's strata[25] had to be discarded entirely, since it did not seem to have ontological validity. It is important though that those strata that were retained (or newly established) obey the two ontological laws agreed upon by Ingarden and Hartmann. These are, in short: 1 The strata can be subdivided in varying degrees, but their basic order may not be changed. 2. The lower stratum is always stronger and autonomous, but supplies the material for the higher level, which in turn has room for higher principles.

III. Synthesis of Hartmann's and Ingarden's Strata Models

The following is a brief sketch of a combination of Ingarden's and Hartmann's strata:

(1) The first stratum, the **Material** of the work, corresponds to the *inorganic* stratum in ontological systems. Under "material" one understands color, stone, clay, etc., and in literature the words of language, which are already "objectified spirit"(Scheler), this making the strata relationship in literature especially complex.

(2) The **Order** *in material,* its coordination and the mutual relationship of its parts, which makes possible and determines the appearance of other strata, but must not be confused with the formation of *all* strata.

(3) The **Representational Aspect** of ordered material, the apparent objectivity, corresponding to the *organic* stratum in the ontological system.

(4) The appearance of **Motion** and **Life** in (at least partially) representationally ordered material, corresponding to the *biological-animalistic* world.

(5) The (still momentary) **Psychological Aspect** in lifelike, representationally ordered material, feelings and moods together with their expressive character, corresponding to the *psychic* stratum in the ontological system.

(6) **Action** or the **Temporal Continuum** in psychologically expressive, lifelike, representationally ordered material.

(7) Depiction of **Personality** in material which is experienced in a temporal continuum, and is psychologically expressive, lifelike, and representationally ordered.

(8) The **Symbolic, Significant, Supra-personal,** and **Supra-temporal** aspect (which concerns us all) of the **Fate** of a personality (see above), corresponding to the *intellectual* stratum in the ontological system.

(9) The general **way of feeling about the world,** the **attitude toward it, experience of it,** and **ideas** ("Weltanschauung") of the poet, expressed by the exemplary nature of the

fate of a personality, (as above).

Read from "front to rear"(as presented here), the nine strata of this model become increasingly abstract and general. As I have attempted to express in my formulation, *each stratum makes the subsequent one ontologically possible.* At the same time, *the forming of the more abstract strata determines the forming of the strata that sustain them.* For literary works of art, the foreground and middle strata are decisive. The background strata concern psychology and philosophy just as much as they do aesthetics. This model should be applicable to all forms of (at least partially) *representational* art, though not to art which is completely non-objective.

IV. Advantages of Strata Models

The advantage of strata models lies in their clarification of abstract relationships of characteristics and complexes of characteristics. There is, however, the danger of interference by geological or biological notions. The concept pairs "high-low", "above-below", "exterior-interior", or even "outer-inner" or "shallow-deep", may suggest incorrect ideas of space. The character of literature as art consists precisely in the *appearance* (Erscheinen) of several qualitatively different strata, one behind the other. Therefore, it might be more appropriate to speak of *foreground, middle*, and *background* strata.

The only justification for a system of this kind lies in its *usefulness*, which can be ascertained by asking: what can it make us see that we could not see without it? – Below a few examples for possible applications starting with insights of a general scope and ending with more specific observations.

V. The Question: What is Art?

In comparison to other kinds of objects (e.g., a *practical* object or commodity like a chair, or a *pragmatic* literary genre with mainly *informative* functions, e.g., a scientific treatise), the work of art can be now defined in its ontological uniqueness.[26] It differs, at least potentially, from all other objects in the *richness of its stratification.* Our special relationship to art can be explained by the fact that only art has as many strata as our own personality structure. Our *aesthetic experience* consists in penetrating several strata, from the texture of the foreground to the last strata of meaning. In contrast, the contemplation of a chair carries us, at best, through three strata: (1) the material, (2) its order, and (3) the function, purpose or usefulness of the object. A scholarly tract might present us with something that resembles eight of our strata, however *in a different relationship.* In art (e.g., a novel) one stratum *appears* behind another, as in real life (e.g., meaning behind the mimic expression of an agitated face), whereas in *pragmatic* language, the contents of other strata are merely "talked about" or "referred to", one at a time. The strata are not "built" on one another.

This circumvention of mediating strata is *only possible in language* because of the *double function of its first stratum*, material. The material of the other arts (color, clay, tones, etc.) is mere "material" and only gains meaning in its configuration in later strata. On the other hand, the material of language, namely the words, is already charged with meaning, or as **Max Scheler** would have said, it is already "objectified intellect". This

kind of meaning, adhering to our words by long established convention, is also used for non-artistic, theoretical statements. Language can therefore be used in two ways: one resembles the use of color to *build*, stratum by stratum, a world that acquires meaning. The way is a linguistic system that *combines* symbols with pre-established meaning.

In the first, *artistic*, mode, the artist guides us through one stratum after another. We are made to experience them, each "appearing" behind the other, as in real life. The poet might describe a person in some characteristic activity and make us interpret the psychological meaning of these actions, as we would in an actual encounter. The poet does not formulate the meaning directly. In the *pragmatic* mode, however, an author would theorize about psychological processes by naming them with abstract and precise terms. Of course, both ways can be used in combination, For example, an author can allow a person to theorize and thereby characterize himself. Or an author can sketch reality alternately through description and direct statements. Distinctions of this complexity between poetic and theoretical prose can best be made with the help of the strata model.

VI. The Comparison ("mutual illumination") of the Arts

The special character of any kind of art can be much better described by use of the strata concept. A classic example of a problem that could not be solved before the arrival of strata aesthetics is that of the *special position of music within the other arts.*[27] How many strata does music normally have? Ingarden said only one, whereas Hartmann distinguished several. If more than one, how is it possible that music, as an "abstract art", obviously can dispense with the middle stratum (of representation of appearing reality) without the higher strata collapsing? In general terms: how can music impress us with (and elicit in us) emotion, or even "Weltanschauung" (world view) as in great works such as Beethoven's *Ninth* or Bach's *Passion of St. Matthews,* and yet contain no appearing reality (human beings, landscapes, etc.) in which or "behind which" emotions could appear? What allows us to skip one or more strata and still have powerful emotional experiences?

Careful stratological analysis reveals that this is because in the second stratum in music the material is coordinated in *two* ways, "vertically" (in harmonies that could be compared to color combinations in a painting) and "horizontally" (in motifs, melodies, etc., that develop *in time*). What the painting looses by its static character in the second stratum, it has to re-gain by the concreteness of its third stratum. In the fine arts, *we* have to project (by way of association) movement and the experience of liveliness into the objects and persons depicted in the third stratum. In music, this is not necessary since the sounds themselves move in time (the time of performance), unfold in melodies, increase and fade away in crescendi and decrescendi. The experience of movement, the fourth stratum, is promoted by the musical time structure and can therefore "rest" directly on the second stratum of coordinated material. The omission of the third stratum (of depicted reality) therefore only *seems* to make an exception to the ontological laws of stratification, according to which each stratum has to be supported by the next lower (more concrete) one. Music is the only art that can *afford* to be abstract (non representational) and still convey emotional experience because its very medium is motion in time. Motion for us

contains expression because we are used to experiencing it as the expression of something alive. Fast motions we call "lively". Lack of motion is being experienced as "lifeless". Therefore, we project emotional qualities *directly* into the (real) motion of music, just as into the (associated) motion of depicted reality in a painting. Therefore, in music, the stratum of coordinated material can carry emotional qualities ontologically.[28]

VII. Marxist Theory and the Strata Model

Even *sociological aspects* of literature can be illuminated with the help of the strata model, if we do not limit its application to the observation of phenomena *within* literature (the same is done by psychological and psycho-analytical interpretation). As an example, let us refer briefly to the old topic of discussion between Marxists and their adversaries, whether literature is determined by economics, and if so, how? This questions the kind of relationship existing between the socioeconomic *base* of society and the cultural *superstructure* that includes literature. Let us recall **Marx's** famous statement of 1859:[29] "The ways of material production determine the social, political, and intellectual life process. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their modes of existence, but rather their social existence that determines their consciousness." **Engels** illustrated this in 1845 with an example:[30] "Raffael, as well as any other artist, is determined by previous technical progress in the arts, by the organization of society and division of labor where he lived ... Whether an individual like Raffael is able to develop his talent depends completely on the demand for his talent. This, in turn, is dependent on the division of labor and the resulting progress in education."

Originally, our consciousness was seen merely as a reflection of the outside world. However, as **Lenin** noticed, this reflection of reality in our consciousness is "not a simple, unmediated, mirror-like, dead activity, but rather a complicated, ambiguous one in zigzag-curves that entails the possibility of phantasy evading life."[31] Later, in 1890, Engels refined his economic determinism when he admitted that economic conditions couldn't *directly* influence the intellectual life of a nation. They can only affect the political stratum next to them and will reach the cultural level only via intermediaries. **Peter Demetz**[32] summarizes these more sophisticated visions:

"Engels' letters of his late years sketch a hierarchically ordered conception of economies and creative intellect. The economic basis seems to be expanded through the influence of Taine's concepts; the superstructure unfolds into a surprising complexity of intellectual fields. The relationship between foundation and superstructure is now characterized by the possibility of mutual interaction; moreover, this interaction is subject to the scientifically indeterminate effects of 'a whole series of accidents'. There is no longer a direct contact between more distant spheres; economics may exert its influence upon the neighboring area of politics, but it can no longer force the more distant sphere of literature directly under its tyranny. The more abstract fields of the superstructure are only lightly touched by economic impulses, which, in turn, are subjected to serious metamorphoses on their way through the intermediate levels. Undoubtedly the creative intellect acquires a new dignity: the higher its achievement rises above the economic basis,

the more freely the laws of its own being will operate once more."

It is remarkable that here also the ontological laws of stratification are valid, i.e., that each stratum has to "rest" on another, and that none can be skipped. Which strata could be distinguished was indicated in 1955 by **S. W. Plechanow**:[33] "The artistic activity is one of those which are most removed from the economic base. [...] We have here the following: 1.the state of productive forces, 2.economy, 3.social order [...], 4.psychology, and 5. ideology". How much these strata resemble the ontological ones does not have to be shown. In a similar manner, Engels analyzed the relationship in 1890. For **Stalin** these stratified interactions were too complicated.[34] He denied any intermediary steps between base and superstructure. Sophisticated Marxists, like **Georg Lukacs**, even recognized the possibility of a twofold determination: an ontological one "from the bottom up", and a structural one "from the top down". Once the upper strata have been established, they have a life of their own to a certain degree, and can influence the lower ones. All kinds of tension can develop between cultural strata, i.e., those that have no real base any longer in the lower one, and the socioeconomic base. But finally, according to all Marxists, the lower strata are going to win out. After so many refinements have been built into the basic Marxist doctrine, even many "bourgeois" scholars would probably agree.

Among the more narrowly defined problems that Strata Poetics might be able to offer solutions to, the following might be representative:

VIII. Structure

By now it becomes apparent that what we usually call "structure" in a literary work of art is nothing but the interaction of its strata as described above. Analysis of structure is therefore really analysis of strata, and this doubtlessly was in **Wolfgang Kayser**'s or **Emil Staiger**'s mind when they explained the concept of structure. Herman Meyer phrased it as follows: "Form and content are both material in the literary work of art ... they belong to its structure insofar as they interact and help constitute the esthetic order of the work."[35] The distinction of subject (theme or topic), from form and content (meaning or message) is not contradictory to the strata model. In comparison, however, it is rather coarse-meshed. Nicolai Hartmann has opened our eyes to the fact that even the *form* of art is always graded or stratified;[36] that is to say, each stratum has its own form. This is evidenced by the fact that we can ask about each stratum (from material to world experience) with WHAT as well with HOW. If, for example, we deal in the second stratum of poetry with sensibly ordered word material, we would still have to ask *how* it is ordered (style). The various levels can only exist in a certain form, be it good or bad. It is therefore as inappropriate to ask for *the* form of a literary work of art, as it is to confuse the content with the material of poetry. The content has, according to our model, at least four levels. Formation can apply to the psychological as well as to the representational level or the word material. Even meaning can comprise four to five levels.

Structural analysis has always rightly stressed the *interaction* of levels more than the levels themselves. Hartmann shows that "the formation of a single stratum, isolated, taken for itself, is not esthetic formation at all ... The latter only begins with the succession

of formations of various kinds."[37]

If for a moment we take as the "meaning of poetry" its last three levels, we would have to ask: how is it conveyed? The answer is: *as in life.* It is usually not stated directly, but *appears* in the external behavior of man, often merely in a small but typical segment of his environment; in short, in what is depicted by the preceding strata. The useful term *transparency* (Transparenz) therefore is to be understood as a shining of the last level through the first ones.

Why does the poet have to choose this detour, as **Goethe** demanded so emphatically ("Shape, artist! Don't talk!")? Why can s/he not state directly, what s/he wishes to tell us? Because he can only make us "see" whatever s/he wants to show. The strata become increasingly more abstract as they recede. If s/he supplies us merely with psychological *concepts*, *we* have to flesh them out with intuition and imagination.

What about the seemingly shrewd distinction of "intention of the author" and "intention of the work,"[38] if we understand "intention" here in the sense of our ninth stratum? - It proves to be false and misleading, since it intimates the notion, that anything could "flow into" the work that does not come (consciously or unconsciously) from the author. Assuming a basic conformity of strata in the author and in his work, it becomes easily understandable that not only the conscious levels of the poet's personality shape the work, but also the unconscious ones (in varying degrees according to the type of author). This unconscious transference can even be extended: the poet is shaped by unconscious influences from his environment. In turn he shapes his work, which in its turn projects unconscious stimuli back into its social environment (the audience).

IX. Genre

Structures that qualify especially well as vehicles for expression of our standard experiences are repeated with slight variations. We call them "genres" or "kinds". The strata of the literary work of art solidify at the same time into the *individual* structure of the specific work and into the relatively *constant* structure of the genre, depending on one's point of view. Therefore, genres can be defined as *groupings of literature having resemblances in the structure of their strata that especially qualify them for expressing basic human attitudes (Grundhaltungen) and experiences (Grunderlebnisse).* From their only *relative* constancy (as opposed to classes in the natural sciences), it follows that they are not limiting, but rather *accentuating* or "ideal" concepts. Various genres are fixed structurally in varying degrees, e.g., the sonnet more so than the novel.

The strata of a genre are held together by the same double dependency which also characterizes each single literary work: on the one hand, each level can only exist on the foundation of those under it; on the other hand, its character is determined by higher ones.[39]

Only literature of a grand scope (epic poem, novel, drama) develops all levels. But it seems that, in the single work as well as in a genre, no intermediate level may be omitted totally, since the next higher one always has to rest upon it. Even *lyrical* poetry, which does not contain action and conflict and which goes directly from the sphere of the external (2) or the representational (3) to the stratum of moods and emotions (5), only *seems* to constitute

an exception. In reality even here the level of actions or life in movement (4) is not omitted totally: the voice assumed by the poet (das "sprechende Ich") with which we identify as much as with the epic or dramatic figure, substitutes for the missing level. Without it, the literary work could not exist. For even if it often seems so, it is impossible that things speak to us *directly*. They are dead without the personal perspective of the "lyrical I", however much the latter may be fused with them. Nevertheless, the characteristic manner and intensity in which the lyrical speaker is still present does contribute to the distinction of lyrical genres like sonnet and song. (New perspectives may be gained from these views for the examination of so-called "concrete poesy."[40])

"Ontological", "phenomenological", or "psychological" descriptions of genre do not exclude the *historical* one; rather they found and complement it. If one knows *how* something is constituted (ontological description) and *why* (psychological), the question of the historical and sociological circumstances under which it developed in a specific way is still not made superfluous. On the other hand, one only *fully* understands the history and environmental relation of any phenomenon following an examination under the aspects mentioned earlier.

X. The "Three Unities"

One aspect of the stratified formation of tragedy can be seen in the "three unities" much discussed since **Aristotle**. Their purpose is to aid concentration on a main effect (catharsis). In light of what has been said, we now instead of discussing only *three* unities have to discuss the unity of the linguistic "material", the style, the representational formation of a segment of the world depicted, and the unity of the characters, together with their mimetic and linguistic delineation and psychological motivation, the unity of their actions and fates, and finally, that of their exemplary significance, which in turn reveals the unified world view of the author through theme and content.- All of these strata, if executed improperly, can distract the concentration of the audience.- The *unity of action,* which **Lessing** considered to be most important, is primarily related to the sixth and seventh strata, which directly sustain the stratum of symbolic representation. - The *unity of place* simply indicates that important energies in the drama can remain free for concentration on higher strata, if the objective aspect of the third stratum needs to be executed only once, and then remains unchanged. The *unity of time* takes into consideration the loss of interest, which may occur if characters are presented in overly long time intervals. Our identification with the protagonist is endangered if we must first ascertain whether he/she is still the same and his/her situation has not changed decisively.

XI. Artistic and Aesthetic Value:

Value categories like "immanent truth", "appropriateness to the material", "adequacy", "functionality", "economy", "honesty", "verisimilitude", "genuineness", etc. (partly overlapping as they are), may be assigned to certain strata as criteria for their formation.

More important is Ingarden's differentiation between *artistic* and *aesthetic* values based in artistic and aesthetic objects. The artistic object (or artifact) contains "spots of

indeterminacy" in all of its strata (e.g., the poet cannot tell or describe everything, the painter cannot depict everything, etc.). The recipient has to fill these in, which amounts to a "quasi-creative" act and can account to a large degree for the pleasure in experiencing art. Of course, this act of "concretizing" (konkretisieren) the spots of indeterminacy will be different in each case, depending on the personality structure and "horizon of expectations" (**Jauss**[41]) of the recipients. We know that the latter can change even within the same viewer in different stages of his/her development. For example, works that did not appeal to us in our youth later "open up" after we have acquired the maturity needed for their appreciation. We can therefore say that to each "artistic object" belong as many "aesthetic objects" as the former finds recipients.

Artistic *values* are only *potential* ones, since they (or better: some of them) have to be realized as *aesthetic* values in each individual act of "concretization" of an artistic artifact through a receiver. Even this act can be analyzed in terms of the strata model if we ask, for example, which strata have been determined ("filled in") more strongly by the author, and which leave more freedom for the creativity of the recipient (e.g., naturalism, leaving less freedom in the middle strata than symbolism, and so forth).

XII. "Strata Poetics" and the Question of Literary Value

What we often take to be value criteria (e. g., Roman Ingarden's or Nicolai Hartmann's description of the stratification of a "literary work of art", the concept of "autonomy", or the criterion of "unity" or "wholeness" of a work of literature) are in reality merely structural, ontological, or phenomenological characterizations of a very general nature, which can also be applied to "kitsch" or trivial literature. "Strata Poetics" has universal validity, but does not penetrate to an adequate aesthetical evaluation of literature. It might have done so, if its proponents would have succeeded in a more detailed and precise description of our *experience* of the stratification of literature. This, however, seems to be only possible for individual cases and not in general. Strata theory only describes pre-conditions for the aesthetical impact of literature in the process of the foreground-strata becoming transparent for the background-strata. (Nicolai Hartmann describes it as our "penetrating" the strata.)

Literary value, just as aesthetic value in general, seems to be a culturally determined projection. Strictly speaking, instead of "values" we should only speak of "possibilities" or "pre-conditions for the projection of values." We always have to ask: Value *for whom?* Value is something that *we* endow artifacts with; not groups (or genres) of artifacts, but rather individual ones. Therefore, it does not make sense to talk about "values of the novel" (in general or as a genre), but rather of the value of a certain novel for a certain (type of) reader. Evaluation is not the task of poetics, but rather of individual interpretation.

In conclusion, we would be hard pressed to decide whether the strata model has been more fruitful for observations *within* literature or for comparing the latter with the other arts. Both endeavors have profited immensely from the application of the strata model. Neither Hartmann nor Ingarden, its two initiators, limited his observations to literature. Both enlarged the scope of "strata poetics" to that of "strata aesthetics," providing

us with profound insights into the mode of being as well as into various other aspects of the arts.

Notes

[1]Parts of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the Japanese Society for Germanistics in Tokyo (20.5.1999).

[2]H. Wagner: "Die Schichtentheoreme bei Platon, Aristoteles und Plotin" in *Studium Generale*, 9/6 (1957) 283-291.

[3] Sigmund Freud: *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (1917); *Das Ich und das Es* (1923); *Ges. Schriften* (12 vols., since 1924).

[4] *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (Halle 1916; Berne 1966) 332-345.

[5] *Der Aufbau der realen Welt. Grundriss der allgemeinen Kategorienlehre*. Berlin [3]1964. - *Ästhetik*. Berlin 1953; [2]1966. - *Einführung in die Philosophie. Vorlesungsnachschrift* (Hannover 1949) 121-122.- Comp. Timotheus Barth: „Zur Ästhetik Nicolai Hartmanns" in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 17 (1954) 137-140; Friedrich Löw: „L'estetica de Nicolai Hartmann" in *Aut aut* (1954) 377-383.

Hartmann (1882-1950) studied in St. Petersburg, Dorpat and Marburg. He taught in Marburg (1920-25), Cologne (1925-31), Berlin (1931-45) and Göttingen (1945-50). His basic ideas concerning a strata model for aesthetics were already published (two years after Ingarden's first book) in 1933, in *Das Problem des geistigen Seins. Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Geschichtsphilosophie und der Geisteswissenschaften* (in its 3rd section: "Der objektivierte Geist", pp. 406-515). According to his wife, his strata-aesthetics was completed in 1945, but published only posthumously in 1953 (2nd. ed. 1966), at a time when German scholarship was only starting to re-connect to international exchange of ideas. That may be one reason, why his strata-aesthetics has been almost completely (and undeservedly) forgotten. Rene Wellek, e.g., does not mention Hartman, even in his annotations or bibliography, in: Four Critics: *Croce, Valery, Lukacs, and Ingarden* (Seattle: U. of Washington Press 1981). See also an.13.

[6] *Die Schichten der Persönlichkeit*. Bonn 1938; [8]1969. - There, we read in the "Foreword to the Sixth Edition" (III): "The frequent comparisons of my theories ... with the ontology of Nicolai Hartmann surprisingly suggest, because we both use the word 'stratum', a deeper connection, which is not well considered."- On pages 109 and 167, however, Rothacker uses Hartmann's ontological laws in order to support his own theories. Compare also the first attempt at establishing a strata-model in Hermann Hoffmann's *Die Schichtentheorie* (Stuttgart 1935) and the comprehensive synthesis in Philipp Lersch's *Der Aufbau der Person* (München [7]1956).

[7] In 1974, I published a comprehensive, annotated, international bibliography: *Typologien und Schichtenlehren. Bibliographie des internationalen Schrifttums bis 1970*. Beschreibende Bibliographien 5 (ed. C. Minis, Rodopi N.V., Amsterdam).

[8] *Das literarische Kunstwerk*. Tübingen, 1931; [3]1965; Engl. transl. by George G. Grabowicz: *The Literary Work of Art*. Evanston 1973 - *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks* (1937 in Polish) Darmstadt 1968; Engl. Transl. By Ruth Ann Crowley and Kennet Olson: *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern U. Press 1973. - *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst*. Tübingen 1962. - *Erlebnis, Kunstwerk und Wert*. 1969. - His attempt at establishing individual strata-models for the other arts cannot be discussed in detail here. Compare my book (1978) and Hans H. Rudnick: "Roman Ingarden's Literary Theory" in: *Ingardenia* (ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975) 105-119, as well as Eugene Hannes Falk: *The Poetics of Roman Ingarden*. Chapel Hill: U. of NO Press, 1931.

[9] "Die Idee der Phänomenologie" in *Husserliana*, vol.2, 1958.

[10] See my book (*Typen und Schichten. Zur Einteilung des Menschen und seiner Produkte*. Berne-Munich 1978) which, among other things, was an attempt to lay a foundation for strata-aesthetics, based on Ingarden's and Hartmann's works, though differing somewhat from their findings. The book contains several chapters dealing with the stratification of literature, but always in comparison with that of the other arts.

[11] Emil Staiger: *Die Kunst der Interpretation* 1955; Johannes Pfeiffer: *Wege zur Dichtung*. 1952; Wolfgang Kayser: *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk* 1948.

[12] e.g., Wolfgang Iser: *Die Appellstruktur der Texte. Unbestimmtheit als Wirkungsbedingung*

literarischer Prosa. Konstanz: G. Hess, 1970; *The Implied Reader*: Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press 1974; *The Act of Reading*. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins U. Press 1978. - Iser utilizes Ingarden's terms *concretization, schematic views, intentionality*, and *points of indeterminacy* of the work of art. Comp. Also Jane P. Tompkins, ed.: *Reader-Response Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press 1980.

[13] It seems to be characteristic that he is not mentioned once in a study like Robert Detweiler's *Story, Sign, and Self. Phenomenology and Structuralism as Literary Critical Methods* (Philadelphia 1978), which devotes many pages to Ingarden.

[14]Comp. Katharina Kanthack: *Nicolai Hartmann und das Ende der Ontologie*. 1952; Ingeborg Wirth: *Realismus und Apriorismus in Nicolai Hartmanns Erkenntnistheorie*. 1965.

[15]E g. in *Der Aufbau der realen Welt*. Berlin 1940.

[16]Comp. The article by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. "Essence et existence. Etude a propos de la philosophie de Roman Ingarden et Nicolai Hartmann" in: *Philosophie et l'esprit* (Paris 1957) 255.

[17]Comp. The article by Walter Cerf on Hartmann in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. III* (new York: Macmillan 1967 ff.) 421 ff.

[18]Comp. the article by Henryk Skolimowski on Ingarden, ibid. Vol. IV, S. 193 f.

[19]One of the reasons why Hartmann's thoughts on literature have gone widely ignored may be the fact they are imbedded in general observations on aesthetics and descriptions of other kinds of art (painting, sculpture, music, architecture, ornamental design) and have to be isolated from these by the careful reader. Of the 475 pages in Hartmann's *Ästhetik* (2nd unchanged edition, 1966), only one fifth (roughly 85, if we count isolated paragraphs) deal with literature expressly and exclusively. Nevertheless, the reader gains a comprehensive insight into the position of literature *within* (and in comparison to) the other arts.

Ingarden, on the other hand, went the opposite way. He first published an analysis of the *literary* work of art exclusively, which already in its title announced to literary scholars that the book fell within their realm of competence. Only afterwards did he extend his model to other kinds of art. However, the focus of one philosopher complements that of the other: While Hartmann offers the "large perspective", Ingarden supplies the detailed analysis of literature.

[20] *Einführung*. p. 204.

[21] See note 8

[22] Rothacker (1938) 170.

[23] In my book (1978), I also needed to insure that Hartmann's ontological strata were harmonized with the psychological ones established in the literature to date. Thus, I had to compare all-important psychological and anthropological strata-models and find their common denominators in order to combine these with Hartmann's categories. - Since I discovered that strata-theories are closely connected to type-theories (e.g., the various "Typologien" of German "Charakterologie"), I also had to find a synthesis for the latter. This endeavor occupies roughly the first half of the book.

[24] Described in English in my article: "The Main Differences Between Roman Ingarden's and Nicolai Hartmann's Strata Systems" in: *Acta Humanistica et Scientifica Universitatis Sangio Kyotiensis* 19/3, Foreign. Lang. and Lit. Series, No.17 (June 1990) 64-82.

[25] Ingarden's stratum of "manifold schematized views" (his third): It is not comparable to the others since it does not organize phenomena as such, but rather refers to our recognition of them (point of view). Ingarden's observations on the concretization of the literary work of art and on the important role of hazy spots or "spots of indeterminacy" ("Unbestimmtheitsstellen") are very valuable. They say, however, more about our assimilation of literature than about its ontological structure. This is ironic, since Ingarden and most "phenomenologists" were quite hostile to psychology. But this is also what made Ingarden the father (or at least forerunner) of today's "reception-aesthetics".

[26] See my article "Our Concept of Art in Light of the Strata Theory" in: *Acta Humanistica et Scientifica* 26/3, Foreign. Lang. and Lit. Series, No.23 (March 1996) 50-61.

[27] See my article "Das Schichtenverhältnis im Musikkunstwerk" in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 24/1 (1979) 5-10.

[28] Starting from considerations of this kind I have analyzed the possibilities and limitations of Japanese brush paintings and calligraphy always in comparison to the other arts and within the framework of the strata

model in "Über ostasiatische Tuschmalerei" in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 22/2 (1977) 193-199.

[29] in *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Vorwort, 1859; my translation.

[30] Die deutsche Ideologie (1845) in *Frühschriften*, p. 474; my translation.

[31] W.I. Lenin: "Materialismus und Empiriokritizismus" In: *Über Kultur und Kunst* (1960) p.10.

[32] *Marx, Engels, and the Poets* (Chicago-London 1967) p 151.

[33] *Kunst* (1955) 337-338.

[34] *Der Marxismus und die Fragen der Sprachwissenschaft*, quoted in H. N. Fügen: *Die Hauptrichtungen der Literatursoziologie* (Bonn 1964) p.44.

[35] "Über den Begriff Struktur in der Dichtung" in: *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 92 (1963) 12.

[36] *Ästhetik*, pp.235, 238, 240 and 249.

[37] *Ibid.*, p.240.

[38] This question was discussed at the Fourth Amherst Colloquium on Modern German Literature: Psychologie in der Literaturwissenschaft (May 1. and 2., 1970, University of Massachusetts) and no agreement was reached: see my "Nachträglicher Diskussionsbeitrag" in *Poesie und Wissenschaft* Bd.32 (Heidelberg 1971) 227-230.

[39] N. Hartmann (Ästhetik, pp. 238-239): " ... in appearance the formation of the anterior stratum always stipulates the appearance of the one behind; in the composition of the work of art, however, and in the productive process of the artist the formation of the last strata determines the first. For the exterior is shaped as it is in order to let the formation of the interior shine through. Therefore, it is determined by the last strata. The exterior levels exist for them. And in this sense the formation of the concrete foreground is determined by the last background-stratum." (My translations.)- I would like to add: the "interior" can be unconscious to the poet at least initially. It can exist in hazy form and evolve during the creative process. See my article: "On Beardsley's View of the Artistic Process" in: Acta Humanistica et Scientifica 24/1, Humanities Series no. 21 (1994) 334-340.

[40] Discussed in detail in my article "Grenzen der 'Aussparung' in der Literatur. Das Problem der konkreten Poesie" in: *Acta Humanistica*. 18/3, Foreign Langs. and Lit. Series. No. 3 (1989) 145-186. For the visual arts, compare with my article "Über ostasiatische Tuschemalerei" in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik* 22/2 (1977) 193-199.

[41] Hans Robert Jauss: *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* [1970] Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp 1992.

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Khajuraho: Indian Art History and Canon Formation

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Indian art history and its commentary has long been fraught with disputes over the appropriateness of Western terminology. On the one hand, it is manifestly clear that much of the language of European art history has little to do with the actual stonework or carvings of Hindu temples and reliefs. On the other, it is also clear that without at least some sort of standard commentary, it is virtually impossible for the Westerner to make sense of what she sees, and thus the import of the work is lost and the work itself un- or underappreciated.

Much of what is in print with respect to the art of India more or less recognizes the existence of this conundrum, as the reader is warned again and again that the "Indian sculptor" does not have the same goals as his European counterpart, and so forth.[1] But it is accurate to say that, without some tools of standard argument, it is difficult to place much Hindu work and comprehension of such work is, of course, one of the aims of Asian art history.

Commentary has already been given by a number of writers on the uses of terms such as "mannerist," "naturalist," "portraiture," and the like with respect to the art of India.[2] But the current concern over canon formation yields still another sort of question for the art historian addressing South Asian work: if there is such a thing as an Indian canon, how was it formed? What are the differences, if any, between the sorts of social and political forces at work in say, canon formation of the nineteenth century European continent, and that of the Hindu renaissance? In this paper I will argue that the notion of a canon is itself one of the troubled and problematic European art historical inventions that renders criticism of Indian artwork so difficult.

I

The temples at Khajuraho, along with a few other sites in India, such as Konarak and Mahabalipuram, have long been regarded as exemplars of the finest in Indian stonework. Charles Fabri notes, "The most ecstatic examples of Baroque flamboyant art, paeans in praise of the lush and delectable beauty of this world, sprung up in the kingdom of the Chandelas, now Madhya Pradesh, in and around Khajuraho."[3] Benjamin Rowland, long the chief critic of the art and architecture of India, has this to say about the temple cluster:

> It could well be said that the culmination of the Indo-Aryan genius in architecture was attained in the extraordinary group of temples erected at Khajuraho in central India. These magnificent shrines were dedications of the Chandella Rajput sovereigns....In general, it could be said that the enormous effectiveness of the shrines at Khajuraho depends on their beauty of proportion and contour....[4]

It is obvious that the canonical overview of the art of South Asia, India in particular,

is due to the work of the Europeans who first gazed at the temples, and who wrote the first accounts of what they had seen. But to say so much begs the question of what it was that those visitors brought to their viewing, and what categories they employed in their construction of "better" or "genius." Most of the viewers were, of course, British—thus there is an extensive English-language commentary on Hindu culture and the arts in general beginning in the late eighteenth century.[5]

In a recent work on the various construals that gave rise to modernism, Janet Wolff has gone to some length to detail how categories of exclusion—the female, the Jew—led to a concentric view of the modern as ultimately non-figurative, dynamic, abstract, and canonically articulated by Bell and Fry.[6] I want to argue here that a similar process was at work in the canonical formation of the Indian artworld, but with the added twist that what the Europeans saw in the temples and wall sites of India was largely a vision of the their own invention.

Wolff notes that the making of an art historical canon involves the "construction" of "orthodoxies"; this much also describes the status of various sites in the art history of India.[7] But if European or American art history is relatively easy to categorize and dismantle, art or craft of other cultures presents us with a paradox. In many cases, such work had a purpose within the culture, a purpose that to us might appear sacred or even utilitarian. How does a work—whatever its original purpose—move from this sort of conceptualization to the status of "art"? And what is it about a work or site that might push it in that direction?

For much of the work that has received canonical status in India, it appears that at least two motives were immediately present. Temple sites seem initially to have impressed Europeans because of sheer size; we are constantly told that Khajuraho or Konarak are filled with massive temples, the construction of which—like the pyramids—must have involved untold tens of thousands of hours of human labor. But so much is easy to say, and many sites that have comparatively impressive temples and rock cut stonework are not placed on a par with each other. The second obvious motivation, and one that also recurs in the literature on the subject, might best be described, oddly, as shock value. The two sites just mentioned, along with Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta, are among those most frequently spoken of in art of India circles. But the latter three are to some extent distinguished by cave painting, and thus are not filled with the same sort of work as Khajuraho, or Konarak. What is it that stands out for these particular sites? Overwhelmingly, it is the "erotic" quality of their stonecarvings. Fabri notes of Khajuraho that "the cold calculation that makes pornography is totally absent"; Anand says that we must remember that we are seeing carvings that have to do with the "outcome of the cosmic union."[8] In either case, the fact that the disclaimers are entered signals to us perhaps more than we wanted to know.

II

Once the Europeans had taken notice of Khajuraho, another series of intellectual moves came into play. It must have been clear that the site was remarkable—to British eyes— not only for the subject matter ensconced in the carvings, but also for a variety of

other reasons, many of which obviously had to do with style and, for lack of a better word, craftsmanship. Tersely, the white visitors to the site needed a framework under which to conceptualize what they saw, and the emergence of a place in the soon-to-be developed art historical canon could not have been far behind.

It appears that one of the first categories employed by those who saw Khajuraho (and Konarak) had to do with form and line. It was evident to any onlooker that the curvilinearity achieved in stonework was remarkable; it perhaps had little or no parallel in European artwork. "Fluidity of line," then, became one of the catchphrases to describe the facades of the temples at Khajuraho; the line in question, of course, was not unrelated to what we have already described as shock value, since much of the most remarkable carving is in the "erotic" work. With respect to the temples themselves, Rowland refers to the "vibrant texture of their surface ornamentation."[9] He also notes that the "celestial maidens possess a great vitality expressed in their tortuous movements...the roundness and the softness of the breasts and belly are emphasized...."[10] Kramrisch, another authority, writes that "Subordinated to their monumental context, the images are exposed in the freedom of their movements."[11]

Even the naïve reader might be moved to reflect that it appears to be no accident that Clive Bell and Roger Fry, writing in Great Britain in the early part of the twentieth century, expressed the belief that form was the predominant hallmark of art. The British had by that time, through the process of colonization, long been exposed to a variety of sculptures and craft in which form might be said to be the predominant motif. But the importance of line and form was not, of course, unknown or unexpressed even when Khajuraho was first seen. Thus the first steps toward the creation of an art historical canon for India appear to emerge from the twin instances of shock effect and the desire to categorize it. That this was the case for Khajuraho and similar sites would be difficult to deny.

As we have said, there is little that surprises in the employment of European art historical concepts to address the work of India; after all, these were the only tools at hand. But what is surprising is the extent to which these categories were employed—Rowland, among others, writes frequently of "the Baroque," and of "mannerism."[12] Other parallels seem to have been created simply because it was much easier to use them while writing than to try to think of new rubrics and new forms of conceptualization.

One obvious lacuna in much of the writing has to do with the mythographical work itself. Whether the site is Khajuraho, a cave, or whether the object in question is a miniature, a certain depth of reporting with respect to Hindu constructs would seem to have been necessary. This "depth", sadly, is precisely what is missing from so much of what has been done. Kramrisch herself gives us an example of what such commentary would be like in her work *The Presence of Siva*, where she writes about the notion of the "androgyne god."

> Sati is the Great Goddess. As Sati she acted the part she had to play in the myth of Siva; she issued from and represented the Great Goddess, who had returned into Siva. The Great Goddess, an idea, would be eternally in Siva, while as image she would be Sati, whom Siva would love as his wife.[13]

Admittedly, one cannot expect this level of sophistication with regard to Hindu constructs in much art historical commentary, but a good deal of the criticism is fairly far away from having a grasp of the relevant mythology and worldview. In any case, mythographical or not, the original art historical criticism proceeded apace, and the upshot was the creation of a canon of Hindu carvings, miniatures and stonework, much of which wound up either in Great Britain itself, or in the colonial museums established by the British.

III

In her study of the formation of the canonical works of modernism, and of the notion of the "modern" itself, Janet Wolff repeatedly uses the notion of exclusion to help explain how the canon was established. This notion is crucial to us because it helps explain—surprisingly, one might think—the formation of similar canons for other cultures. Despite the fact that one might naively believe that somewhat different processes were at work, there is abundant reason to think that the art historical canon of the works of India developed, as a whole, in much the same way.

Because the Europeans initially understood so little of what they saw, shock value was of great importance in delineating the objects, sites, and places that were to later become of paramount importance. Although translations from Sanskrit proceeded apace during the nineteenth century (and hence helped the better educated obtain some kind of grasp of what they were viewing), a site such as Khajuraho had an immediate stunning effect on the viewer for its sheer size, the nature of its depictions, and because at least some of its carvings could be placed under certain common Eurocentric aesthetic rubrics, such as "vital," "flowing," or "exhibiting plasticity."

Once a site or temple had been mentioned in enough sources by enough visitors, it became part of the group of objects and places routinely mentioned by later authorities such as Rowland and Kramrisch.[14] The authorities give us some kind of a feel for how the process occurred simply by way of recitation of facts: Fabri, in a sense, notes size and scope, insofar as Khajuraho is concerned. He writes that "It is often suggested that they [the temples] were all built, all the reputed eighty-five of them within a short period. One authority actually claimed that all were built within a hundred years."[15] Anand alludes to size and a sort of sheer stunning quality when he notes that the temples had been "carved out in great profusion," and that they represent the "triumph of sculpture over architecture."[16] Rowland, while noting contour, calls the group "extraordinary," again an at least implicit allusion to scale and size.[17]

Having struck a sufficient number of observers, and not readily excludable on the basis of small size, depiction of the mundane, or ordinariness of stonework, this temple site rapidly became a demarcator of the canon, and, indeed, a paradigm of cultural achievement. Rowland calls the site the "culmination" of a certain sort of cultural genius; Anand says that it represents one of the "highest and most intense moments of the Mediaeval Hindu Renaissance."[18]

The constant use of superlatives in the description of the site, and Anand's evocation

of the "Mediaeval Hindu Renaissance" might almost be enough to make the observer forget that this commentary is based on sheerly colonial observations and category construction. What is termed the medieval Hindu Renaissance is a category put together by Western observers. Its overt parallel to the Western Renaissance is, of course, deliberate. What is most poignant however, is that while the processes of art historical categorization of the European Renaissance—reliance on patronage, association with aristocrats,. debt to a certain school—might be transparent to many an art history student, the process with respect to the art of India is no less forceful, and considerably less transparent.

In an odd series of moves, many of the comments made by the art historians in the process of canonization reflect some of the original processes at work in the European objects or sites with which the Indian sites are inevitably compared. We know, for example, that cathedrals in the European tradition were constructed through various sorts of patronage, and the acts and benefits associated with them strongly influenced how they were perceived as works of architecture and as "statements" within the tradition. Citing Rowland one more time, he says with respect to Khajuraho that:

Seen from the exterior, the temples of Khajuraho impress the beholder with the same grandeur of unified design that we recognize in a Gothic cathedral, whether or not we are acquainted with its iconographic significance.[19]

Although it is by no means clear which Gothic cathedral Rowland has in mind, whichever one he does use as an exemplar in this context is itself part of the art historical process under examination here—it is just that that process might be more obvious.

IV

In *AngloModern*, her work on the formation of modernism as an art historical construct, Janet Wolff cites the work of Kathleen McEnery, a comparatively unknown American artist of the '20's and '30's whose work is now in the process of being "rediscovered." It is part of Wolff's point that McEnery's work might have received more attention at the time, had she not been female, working in the realist tradition, and somewhat geographically isolated. With respect to McEnery and the categorization of her work, Wolff writes:

> In the end, one could conclude that the categories themselves are unhelpful. But from the point of view of the central theme of this book, namely the marginalization of nonmodernist work, Kathleen McEnery would have been firmly situated by the dominant narrative of twen- tieth-century art on the side of the secondary, the retro- grade, the inferior—in other words, the realist tradition.[20]

Although it is not so obvious how the categorization procedures for Indian sites worked, one can draw at least one conclusion from what is available on Khajuraho: sites that did not impress for sheer size, spectacularly deviant (in European eyes) topics sculpted, or number of temples on the site probably were marginalized during the formation of the art historical canon for this tradition. Although plasticity of carving in the stonework is frequently mentioned in the case of Khajuraho, it is almost always mentioned in close

proximity to the topics depicted. Thus, to recapitulate, a combination of factors in the case of Hindu stonework frequently creates the overall effect: Rowland says that the temples are "Gothic," but also mentions "iconographic significance." He seems to denigrate the importance of the latter, and yet it is clear from his comments and the comments of others that it can scarcely be denigrated. Even misunderstood or barely understood iconographic significance is powerfully important, and it would be difficult to argue that being faced with incomprehensible carving—especially of a "startling" type—did not work in the favor of the temple site in question, at least insofar as first impressions are concerned.

The art history of India has been the purview of comparatively few commentators—the chief names are perhaps Kramrisch, Rowland, Coomaraswamy and a few others. Although the latter is from the subcontinent, most of the authorities on this work, as it is usually taught in colleges and universities, are not. Build-up over a period of time drives the criticism on the art of India; the process of canon formation here is at least a couple of hundred years old. We know the names of the major sites, and visitors to India, if they have an interest in the arts, can readily rattle them off. But more important, at least in our postcolonial view, is how that list was compiled. A few European observers were stunned, at a certain point in time, by what they saw. The results of their surprise on a few occasions have been translated into what is now regarded as a strongly-set canon of the Art of India.

Notes

[1]One of the most easily available plate books on Khajuraho, published and with commentary by Mulk Raj Anand, takes pains to note that the "Indian sculptor" is not particularly interested in "objective reality." (Mulk Raj Anand, *Khajuraho*, Bombay: Marg Publications, 1968, p. 25.)

[2]"Naturalism and Mannerism in Indian Art," in *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Spring 2001.

[3]Chalres Fabri, "The Fulfillment of the Baroque in Khajuraho," in ed. Anand, pp. 6-12. This citation p. 8.

[4]Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967, p. 175.

[5]For an account of some early responses to India, see *Worlds ofKnowing*, New York: Routledge, 2001, Chs. 2-3.

[6]Janet Wolff, *AngloModern: Painting and Modernity in Britain and the United States*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[8]Fabri in ed. Anand, p. 12; Anand in ed. Anand, p. 4.

[9]Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 177.

[11]Stella Kramrisch, "Reflections on the House and Body of Gods," in ed. Anand, pp. 17-20; this citation p. 19.

[12]See fn. 2.

[13]Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 203.

[14]One might think it remarkable that the number of frequently mentioned objects is really quite small, numbering perhaps only in the high dozens. But when one thinksof how these objects came to be mentioned, and the processes by which other sites and/or objects must have been excluded, the smallness of the number is not so surprising.

[15]Fabri, "Fulfillment," in ed. Anand, p. 8.

[16]Anand, "Homage to Khajuraho," in ed. Anand, pp. 1, 2.
[17]Rowland, *Art*, p. 175.
[18]Rowland, *ibid.*; Anand in ed. Anand, p. 1.
[19]Rowland, *Art*, p. 176.
[20]Wolff, in *Anglo*, p. 66.

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Gregory Corso's Post-vegetarian Ethical Dilemma

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Gregory Corso is often thought of as a comic side-kick to the more important Beat poet Allen Ginsberg. As the leader of the Beat movement, Ginsberg received serious critical attention, and it is no longer doubtful whether he will be included in the mainstream canon. Corso's "zany" work places him as a lightweight Beatnik, remembered outside the movement for his poem "Marriage," and inside the movement largely as a problematic character for whom the others Beats felt the burden of responsibility.[1] Corso's work has been consistently misread. Derek Parker writes, "Gregory Corso first became widely known in the U.S. when, in 1956, his name was linked with those of Ginsberg, Kerouac, Snyder, and others in a group which became known as 'the Beat poets.' Like all such arbitrarily catalogued groups, this one dispersed soon after it was discovered; and it has become clear that Corso's is an
individual voice which has relatively little to do with the voices of the other 'Beats.' It is a quieter, more introvert voice than Ginsberg's; more discipline and intense than Kerouac's" (237). Indeed, Corso is not interested in the politics, or ecology, or other concerns of the other poets in this arbitrary grouping. Corso's humor belies a profound, far-reaching thought which goes to the heart of the madness of living in a food chain. In Corso's poetry, he takes on serious philosophical issues in such a way as to show that he is far in advance of any of the Beat writers, as he destroys the hunky dory assumptions of the ecology movement and reveals the monstrous heart of nature. Throughout his poems, Corso takes on the difficulty to being ethically human within nature, a theme which is touched upon frequently by post-modern philosophers, but Corso seems to outstrip even them in terms of his insights. The basic question, as Corso puts it, is, can we be ethical when we must eat other creatures in order to live? If other creatures have the right to co-exist with us, and to be considered as subjects, and since we must eat other creatures in order to survive, is there a possibility of ethics and morality in our world? The obvious answer is no. Corso's work for several decades was to make this clear. The result is that he has been ignored, because his ecological suspicions do not accord with the contemporary melanoia (opposite of paranoia) regarding the food chain.

At a mid-point in Grogory Corso's career, he began to write poems in which animals appear without humans. Completely overlooked by any of Corso's commentators thus far, and yet retained by Corso in his Selected Poems (1989) the short poem "Active Night," from the collection Long Live Man (1962), contains many secrets to Corso's vision:

Active Night

A tarsier bewrays the end of an epical rain
Burying beetles ponderously lug a dead rat
A moth, just a few seconds old, tumbles down fern
Bats are drinking flowers
The lonely tapir walks the river bottom
And up comes a manatee with a sea-anemone
On its nose

(Long Live Man 72)

In this poem, set in the Malaysian rain forest, a variety of animals return to their feeding after a long, pensive wait. A tarsier's appearance "bewrays," or prophesies, the end of the rain. The action and diction turns to New York street talk with "lugs a dead rat," as the end of the "epical" rain is reached. This eco-system functions much like a utopian nightlife scene—every individual going about the business of pleasure—hence its title. Since groups mean the death of the individual to Corso, the two groups presented here, "burying beetles" and "bats", are explicitly or implicitly linked to death. The burying beetles, like pall-bearers, lug a dead rat to a softer place, where they will then bury it, and live off the fly larvae that will develop inside its underground carcass. The bats, with images of vampires flitting through our cultural image bank, in this instance "drink" from flowers, a sexy image, in which the bats, simply by following their natural instincts, end up all doing the same sweet thing together. Corso's initial hypothesis seems to be that if everyone just minds their own business by following their own nature, then everyone can be content within nature. But the last few lines debate this conclusion. A tapir, a smaller animal related to the rhinoceros, is walking along the river bottom, feeling lonely, when he sees a manatee surface—with a sea-anemone on its nose. The sea-anemone, which eats small sea-creatures, has apparently mistaken the manatee's nose for something to eat, and the manatee surfaces in this humorous close, an ending akin to a mousetrap on a clown's nose in a tiny circus. The tapir, we may assume, now relishes his loneliness, as his nose at least is not being chewed by someone else, so perhaps, the poem seems to say it is better to be lonely. Corso, in a sense, denies the very possibility of community between species in the poem. Although the poem has a circus feeling, there is a bitterness at the heart of the poem, in that creatures are forced to perceive each other with suspicion.

Long before this poem was written, Corso had already written against a simple Gaia concept of nature in his poem, "A Pastoral Fetish", which appeared in his first collection of poems, Vestal Lady on Brattle. This book was the only one to have at least one poem in its written before Corso had met the other members of the so-called Beat generation (he met Ginsberg in 1950, and "Sea Chanty" had been written in 1945), and thus shows that his anti-ecological concerns were not conceived against the other Beats, but were part of his original vision of nature and society. Poems such as "Sea Chanty", "Song", and especially "Pastoral Fetish", are the most obvious examples of his tendency in Corso's early verses, but nearly all of the early poems touch on this same theme. As Gregory

Stephenson writes in his book on Corso, "The central motif of the poems in this collection is that of a predatory devouring or destruction of innocence and beauty. This theme is first treated in the title poem of the collection where an aged woman devours a child; a vampyric, cannibalistic act that is apparently part of her daily regimen. In 'You Cane Last Season', a lover consumes his beloved, while the poem 'Coney Island' presents a comedian-crab and a fungi-man whose common and consuming interest is eating the feet of the bathers on the beach. The sea itself is seen as a cruel devourer in 'Sea Chanty' in which the narrator's mother is first eaten by the sea and is then unknowingly eaten by the narrator himself. In "Song", it is the 'pig's daughter' who is to be betrayed, killed, and eaten by her husband. Other predators in these poems include the mouse-eating mandrill in 'Vision Epizootic'; the 'drooling desirer' with his 'long greasy coat, and the bloodstained fingernails' who stalks his human prey in "The Early Morning... and the perverse, flower-murdering Old McDonald in 'A Pastoral Fetish'" (Stephenson 11-12).

A Pastoral Fetish

Old Mac Donald wears clod-hoppers
In his walk through fields of lilac and dandelion
A storm-trooper, like a Klee tittering machine, he stomps:
Crunch one lilac here; crunch another dandelion there,
Here, there, everywhere (he's got no mercy at all)
Crunch crunch here and a crunch crunch there

Crunch everywhere
There comes a time when he's got to stop
Take off his shoes; go to bed...
Ah, that's when Old MacDonald's in his glory.
Green blood and mud-caked leather he digs the most.
He makes it a habit to sleep his nose by his toes
so that all night long he could snore in the sticky smell
Of murdered lilac and dandelion.
It's the old bastard's greatest kick

(*Mindfield* 13)

Comparing the nursery rhyme figure of Old Mac Donald to a storm-trooper, and calling him an old bastard, subverts the innocence of the children's genre, and gives the poem an adult realism. In a sense Corso is stomping on the innocence of childish rhymes, and showing the bitter truth of life in a food chain, in which flowers can be murdered, and nobody can say anything about it, because even today plants do not have subjectivity, and they are unlikely to get it before a court of law, even if animals are well on their way. The fun of destroying nature is something that almost everyone has felt—stomping on beauty, pulling the wings off insects, skinning frogs and shooting guns at birds. It is something wired into people, who are, after all, predators, with teeth, and hard nails, and stomachs they are forced to fill.

A long philosophical tradition from Plato through Martin Heidegger denies animals the power of rationality and speech in order to rationalize our dominance over nature. Critic John Lewellyn writes of Heidegger that, "...his problem here is very much Kant's problem: how to understand the classical definition of man as a rational animal without implying that Dasein and the animal are species of a shared genus. The same problem surfaces in [Emmanuel] Levinas' remark 'We understand the animal, the face of an animal, in accordance with Dasein.' Levinas, Heidegger and Kant are all preoccupied, like the Stoics, with the problem of safeguarding the dignity of man." (Lewellyn 83).

Corso's humor consists largely of continually unmasking the foundational truth that we live in a food chain and must eat other creatures in order to live. The food chain, though never named as such, emerges in his earliest poetry, such as the poems "Song", "A Pastoral Fetish", and "The Sausages", from *Vestal Lady on Brattle* (1955), inscribing the unassimilable and disturbing content of the food chain within the absurd feel-good rhymes of childhood. Within the self-cannibalizing convoy of subjects known as a "food chain", Corso relentlessly questions the possibility of a logical ethics, and the most he can achieve is an absurdist aesthetics. In the later poem "This Was My Meal", from the collection *Gasoline* (1958), Corso writes:

In the peas in the upside down letters of MONK
And beside it, in the Eyestares of Wine
I saw Olive and Blackhair
    I decided sunset to dine

I cut through the cowbrain and saw Christmas
And my birthday run hand in hand through the snow
I cut deeper
    and Christmas bled to the edge of the plate

I turned to my father
    and he ate my birthday
I drank my milk and saw trees outrun themselves
    valleys outdo themselves
    and no mountain stood a chance of not walking
Desert came in the spindly hands of stepmother
I wanted to drop fire-engines from my mouth!
But in ran the moonlight and grabbed the prunes.

(*Mindfield* 39)

In the upside down letters of MONK, the poem begins. If we turn MONK upside down we get the word KNOW. What is it that monks would know if their world were righted? It is that we eat. When the narrator cuts through the cowbrain he sees Christmas—not only a critique of Christianity, but of the traditional foods we eat at Christmas. Everything is busy eating in the poem, pleased with the taste of other things, and there is real fear as

the father eats the child's birthday. Trees take off running, even mountains run to escape the general mayhem, and finally, even something as insubstantial and traditionally poetic as "moonlight" runs in and grabs the prunes.

Corso does not accept the ethical face of humanity. He would never accept the project of Heidegger and Levinas of "safeguarding the dignity of man" (Lewellyn 83). Cannibalizing other beings, something which we must do by our very nature in that there is nothing we can eat which didn't first have a life of its own, seemingly undoes any morality we might claim to possess, as soon as we grant being to other creatures. Morality is, Corso avers, merely a series of conventions, or masks. Eating is a public secret which we must repress in order to continue the fiction of living in an ethical world.

In his novel *American Express,* Corso presents a scene in which a seal-trainer's seal is stolen from him at a party and cooked. The seal meat is then passed around. Very quickly, the seal disappears. The seal-trainer remains in the room, and after the orgy of consumption is accomplished, he is accused of having partaken:

> "You ate it all!" Vatic accused Sgarlotto.
>
> "Would I eat but a morsel? I could not. I too am hungry, but ate nothing. A sacrifice of the stronger need—disposed in ethics—the animal was my pet, sir" (128).

A few pages later Corso pushes the cannibalistic theme even further. A statue of Christ is smashed, cut into small pieces and cooked in oil. "'Carroll', I said, 'have you ever thought of frying bits of Christ?' I had chopped off an entire foot and he watched it fry with horror in his eyes" (139).

Corso's character Mr. Plow argues that, "Man can live without food. There are ways. But these ways are held back. There are certain forces, the restaurant industry in particular, that put all their effort into keeping these ways out of man's consciousness. Farmers, cattlemen, the entire scheme of eating would crumple were the ways exposed—" (*American Express* 133). These lines are some of the few that Corso martials against the general slaughter of everything by everything, a wall to wall bloodbath of eating and carnage which is spread from one end of Corso's art to the other, over a period of more than forty years, from the first poem, "Sea Chanty", written at the age of 15 (Stephenson 11), to the drawing of knights slaughtering each other at the end of Corso's *Selected Poems* on page 265, with the title "Life is a Battlefield." Unrelentingly, this is Corso's theme, which is mitigated, as Stephenson writes, by "....love, humor, compassion...and the imagination" (19). But which is predominant in Corso's vision—the slaughter or the love? It seems to me that slaughter wins, just as it does in life, eventually.

In "A Dreamed Realization," from *The Happy Birthday of Death*, Corso writes that, "Black there in God creatures sat like stone/...—no light in their various eyes." "It was Life jabbed a spoon in their mouths./ Crow Jackal hyena vulture worm woke to necessity" (49). The price of life, which is death, is also distressingly recounted in "Food", in the same collection, even if in this short section Corso abstains from eating, this abstention can only be momentary, an ethical pose permitted by a full stomach. Corso writes, "The

farmer will never love me/ nor I, he/I'd rather go hungry / Than assist his chicken slaughter / Attend his Sate Fair/Or screw his famous daughter" (33-34).

Corso writes often of zoos in poems such as "Berlin Zoo", "Puma in Chapultepec Zoo", and "A Difference of Zoos", because they accentuate the captivity of animals, but Corso always implies that the metaphor is easily reversible, to show the captivity of the animal-like instincts in man. Because they help to erase the humanist line that reserves a special place for humanity, Corso shows a special affinity for those creatures that lie somewhere between man and animal, in that zone which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call in *Thousand Plateaus* "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal".

A Difference of Zoos

I went to the Hotel Broog;
And it was there I imagined myself singing Ave Maria
to a bunch of hoary igneous Brownies.
.....
.....
I sang Ave Maria
for the Heap, for Groot,
for the Mugwump, for Thoth,
the Centtaur, Pan;
I summoned them all to my room in the Broog,
the werewolf, the vampire, Frankenstein,
every monster imaginable
And sang and sang Ave Maria—
The room got to be unbearable!
I went to the zoo
and oh thank God the simple elephant.

(*Long Live Man* 62)

In the final line, Corso thanks God for the comparatively simple elephant. Corso's Italian-Catholic upbringing, which upheld the dignity of man but, at least in the lives of certain saints such as St. Francis, also upheld the dignity of animals, and is a major source of lyric tension in Corso's work, as it contrasts so painfully with the actual nature of the world, in which one eats creatures in order to live. In the poem "Saint Francis," Corso writes:

I praise you your love,
Your benediction of animals and men...
.....
.....
I see you with eagle,

Penguin, vultue, seagull;
Nor be it a bird
But an elephant, a herd!
All on your goodly compassionate shoulders.

(*Long Live Man* 36)

If we are all fragile beings placed in an immanent world, rather than immortal beings in a transcendent one, questions of morality arise with the problem of mortality. If we must treat this world with respect, since there is no possibility of an afterlife, we are yet simultaneously prevented from doing so by having to eat our neighbors: the animals and vegetables. In the poem above, St. Francis does very well with birds on his shoulders, but then Corso piles on the heavier facts of the food chain: not just one elephant, but a whole herd, and one can imagine the saint being crushed into a blood pancake.

The way out of this horrible realization that "life is a battlefield" recently has been to grant animals subjectivity and to argue for vegetarianism. Soon, there will probably be laws passed against eating meat, just as there are laws against eating people, if this alarming trend continues. It all began innocently enough. For two millenia male European philosophers held that women possessed limited moral understanding. Aristotle wrote in *Politics* "For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority... The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying..." (270-271), and the cites Sophocles to the effect that "Silence is a woman's glory" (271). In *the Summa Theologica* St. Thomas argues along with Aristotle that women have "a defect in the active power," perhaps coming from some "external influence, such as that of a south wind, which is moist" which preclude them from the clearer, drier reasoning necessary for moral judgment (Aquinas 880). Today such chauvinistic thinking is considered more and more antiquated, as western democracies have accepted for at least fifty years the right of women to vote, to be educated, and to hold increasingly complex professional positions, including the presidency. Now to grant men souls, and not women, is ridiculous. But must we then grant all of nature a soul? A paradoxical double-movement is taking place in eco-feminist discourse, Ferry says, in which women are held to be more "natural" than men, and thus this would undermine women's right to "rationality" and "humanity": consigning women to the precise roles that Aristotle laid out for them two thousand five hundred years ago—irrational, emotional beings whose "irrationalism" consigns them to certain positions outside the logos. Luc Ferry is a contemporary Enlightenment thinker concerned with the destruction of human subjectivity among postmodernist philosophers and argues for rights among the human genus which he would deny to animal species. He argues that "To assert that women are more 'natural' than men is to deny their freedom, thus their full and whole place within humanity" (Ferry 126). Without full human subjectivity, women will have the same status as animals, which Ferry argues must not be accorded the same privileges as humanity. Rights and the idea of women's subjectivity were launched by the early feminist movement, properly, Ferry believes, only to be challenged unwittingly by more recent eco-feminists who would place women back amongst

the animals. At the same time, these same women would like animals to have rights. Ferry sees this second movement as preposterous. The animal rights movement is now trying to extend the notion of subjectivity and rights to other mammals, and even trees, which, Ferry thinks, makes the entire idea of rights ridiculous. Which way is it going to be? Is humanity going to extend rights to women and animals, thus granting everything subjectivity, or will men be stripped of rationalism as well, and stripped of rights? To grant everything the right to vote would be fun, but would it mean anything to grant a worm the right to vote and hold office? For without the notion of subjectivity, of a precious autonomy outside the food chain, there can be no vote granted. A worm would have to speak, as would a tree, in order to take its place in the legislature. The decisions we make over rights, Ferry asserts, are not whimsical philosophical debate but will affect the legal realm, and the way every category of life is treated in the future. What counts as food, and what is exempt from being eaten, and treated as object without subjectivity?

Christopher D. Stone's landmark article, "Should Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects," appeared in 1972 in the *Southern California Law Review*, and was later reprinted as an influential short book (cited in Ferry xvi). While the notion of radical democracy for all beings continues to spread, Corso is working in the other direction, a direction of many postmodern scholars, in arguing that humankind does not possess rationality, and in fact is merely animal. Corso has gone further than any of the postmodern philosophers in asserting the animality of people, and thus seems to implicitly accept cannibalism, as he does from his earliest poetry on forward. Therefore, not only do animals not have subjectivity, but neither does man. Meanwhile, animal rights activists assert that "...all animals are born equal and have equal rights to exist" (quoted in Luc Ferry 3). The philosopher Luc Ferry sees this spreading of rights as a continuation of the French Revolution of 1789 (Ferry 3), a spreading of a radical democracy which he thinks must be curtailed, if it is not to end in nonsense. "Law is always for men, and it is for men that trees or whales can become objects of a form of respect tied to legislation – not the reverse... the most common response among [ecological] fundamentalists is that it is the 'biosphere' as a whole, because it gives life to all beings, or at the very least allows them to sustain their existence. But the biosphere gives life both to the AIDS virus and to the baby seal, to the plague and to cholera, to the forest and to the river. Can one seriously claim that HIV is a subject of law, equal to man" (Ferry 139-140)? Ferry asserts that man has greater freedom than animals, and this makes us separate and special, above the general slaughter. Animal cultures, he says, persist over thousands of years without any change. Human cultures are constantly changing, constantly evolving, and thus we have a freedom which distinguishes us from animals. "...for unlike an animal, which is subject to the natural code of instinct particular to its species more than to its individuality, human beings have the possibility of emancipating themselves, even of revolting against their own nature. It is by so doing, that is, by breaking away from the order of things, that one gives proof of an authentic humanity and simultaneously accesses the realm of ethics and culture" (Ferry 115). Is Ferry's fury over the furry ferrets gaining rights in a fun and fair fearless world

more than simple conservativism, a hope to keep things as they are? If nobody has rights, then the world is a free for all, in which murder is as legitimate as negotiation. If everything has rights, then to step on a flower inadvertently would mean that one could be charged with murder. Is there a balance that we could strike between these two extremes? Ferry wants us to see that human beings have the gift of being able to think over a certain period of time, outside of instinct, outside of natural needs, which allows us to create a culture, a legal realm, thanks to the length of our memories (a fish, by comparison, has a memory of approximately eight seconds). This, and speech, allow us to think, and communicate, important moral concepts which animals cannot access.

It is Gregory Corso's cynical laughter over this separation of man and animals that led him to write during the first hours after President John F. Kennedy's assassination, a poem in praise of the animalistic aspects of man. Corso, in this poem, sees murder as legitimate, as a part of a long tradition going back to Rome, back through the animal species, back to the very beginning of life. Corso doesn't see anything "emancipating" in man which is essentially worth preserving. No ethics because there is no such thing as an "authentic humanity" and no culture, either. The radiant moments of mankind are dimmed by its blacker moments, which are part of our legacy in a natural world. This doesn't mean he's happy about it: it's just the way it is.

Come you illiterate creepy dumbbells harken the cry of
the true Assassin
I damn! I hail!
I summon the Blessed Lord of the Ice Cold Nanook Country
and eat raw seal meat with Him!
I curse the earth in Space and in Time!
I pee upon the evolution of the Rocks!
I weep upon the first living things!
Bang my fists on the unknown age of the world!
I vomit up Natural Selection and the change of the Species!
I laugh like a sick dinosaur o'er
the invasion of the dry lands by Life!
I smirk at the butterfly like a pimply-faced stumble-bum!
By the wings I yank by the wings the wings the lovely wings
By the throat I smote the Age of the Reptile!
So too the Age of the Mammal!
So too O very much so the Ancestry of Man!
Man descended from a walking ape!
I awake the lazy greasy Neanderthal and spit in his big sad
Stupid eye!
I pummel my Colt. 38 into the iron skin of the Paleolithic
muralist!
I look contemptuously down upon the screwed-up Neolithic
creep!

(from "Lines Written Nov. 22, 23-1963-in Discord," *Mindfield* 141)

Corso sees the good in man, the democratic, freedom loving part, as being hopelessly eclipsed by a demonic animalistic agency which has made its way into every living thing. "I have made goats of every King every Pope every puny club-footed Elect" (*Mindfield* 141). Corso sees even God Himself as being merely an animal, or as having animal faculties, in the poem "God is a Masturbator," (*Elegiac Feelings American* 112). There is nothing that is not immanent, and nothing which is not demned, and fatally flawed, and utterly animalistic to the core.

Corso is not willing to accept the human dignity of the "face;" and he has been willing to dispense with all spiritual traditions and regard man as a vicious and unredeemable animal. Corso anticipates and raises the ante on one of the most important questions posed by postmodernism: how can we have an ethics in a food chain, if everything is beyond good and evil? Corso defies simple popular solutions mandated by unitary aesthetics and humanistic good taste; instead, Corso offers us a fragmentary, hard look at the natural world in all of its paradoxical hilarity. While Levinas, Heidegger and Kant are preoccupied with "safeguarding the dignity of man" (Lewellyn 83), Corso increasingly questions the "face" of this civilized, alienated man and posits a lurking rapist who rapes and murders innocent schoolgirls. "The kind man behind the kind man / Is the kind of man who could and can" (*Elegiac Feelings American* 77). As Corso distances himself from his early Catholicism,[2] his writing grows darker, he turns to heroin and drink, and his output diminishes. From 1958 to 1962, Corso produced three ebullint volumes in four years. Corso says in his interview in *The Beat Vision* that he began to take drugs at the age of 33, which would have been in 1963 (179). After that, there have been only two complete volumes, and these poems (when they are successful, such as "On One Month's Reading of English Newspapers" on rape quoted just above) are even more bitter, as the qualifying aspect of humor is often muted or even extinguished in these poems. Corso cannot find a transcendent truth, but he cannot find the actual world to his taste either, as long as there remains the "drudgery and insult of food" (*American Express* 104). Unlike the more popular American eco-poets such as the Luddite Wendell Berry or Zen naturalist Gary Snyder, who are busy finding delicious truths that we can live with and then pointing the Way, Corso finds despicable truths that he cannot live with, and reveals his fruitless attempts at ethical reconciliation. He is treated with contempt by Gary Snyder in the collection *The Beat Vision*, where Snyder suggests a confrontation with Corso because Corso doesn't share the consensus vision that the Beats, Snyder says, were coming towards in the 1970s. "It's very interesting that we find ourselves so much on the same ground again, after having explored divergent paths; and find ourselves united on this position of powerful environmental concern, critique of the future of the industrial state, and essentially shared poetics, and only half-stated but in the background very powerfully there, a basic agreement on some Buddhist type psychological views of human nature and human possibilities" (*The Beat Vision* 3-4). Corso doesn't fit into any of this—denying religion, denying a critique of anything—he writes down what he sees, and is not a social reformer at all. " ..

in some ways I'm a good Maoist" Snyder says (15), while Corso isn't with the program at all, and Snyder considers him to be a problem. "... I haven't really tried to deal with where Gregory's at; but he's had a lot of self-created hard times ... But we're all responsible collectively in some sense for Gregory, so what I would like to do is all of us (Lawrence, myself, and Allen and so forth) sit down and have a collective meeting with Gregory. That's I'm going to suggest, too. I've learned how to do that where I live. Collective meetings of mutual and personal self-criticism" (24-25). Snyder's Maoist-inspired program of "mutual and personal self-criticism" would indicate that unless Corso was willing to get with the program, he would get stomped. Snyder actually suggests this to one of the interviewers who is having a hard time understanding one of his friends who has adopted an Eastern viewpoint. "I'd kick the fuck out of him, that's all", Snyder says (27). And then he says, blandly, "Say, 'Make sense, you son of a bitch.' That's what I do with people" (27). When one remembers that eco-saint Gary Snyder broke his first wife Joanne Kyger's jaw in a fight, Snyder's bullying banter takes on a less than jocular character.

Corso's thinking undoes the Buddhist ecologist's insistence that nature makes sense. But does the food chain make sense? Can it be understood? Should Corso be stomped for this? Can Corso be forced to make sense on Snyder's Buddhist ecological grounds, in which Snyder wants to write about nature, without including any of nature's terror, its nightmarish aspect, in which creatures die without dignity, in the maws of others? In which predators race through the jungles, killing things for nutrition? May be Snyder should be asked (very gently) to make more sense on Corso's terms.

Like many postmodern philosophers and like Gary Snyder, Corso questions the special place accorded man in western philosophy's arrogant relationship to the natural world, but Corso came from a world of gangs, prisons, and hard beatings as he grew up in the Italian American section of New York City. He doesn't have the kind of privileged background Gary Snyder, or Allen Ginsberg, or most other members of the cultural elite took for granted in their childhood, and thus they can perhaps more easily idealize the world. Jacques Derrida in his interview "Eating Well", says, "... one must begin to identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorized, understood ideally... The sublime refinement involved in this respect for the other is also a way of 'Eating Well', in the sense of good eating but also doing well to eat" (115). This project of "respect for the other" whom we must eat has been left out of western civilization since Plato said that animals were outside of the realm of Being, unworthy of respect, because they could not speak. Derrida asserts that we ought to at least have respect for the animals we devour, and say as much, as if that would somehow matter to them. Corso distrusts all speech and points out "Everything that is said is said by man—I say it is stupid, disgusting, to listen!" (*American Express* 143).

In an interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida questions the artificial boundary between man and animal. He extends subjectivity as far as the vegetable realm, but my question is: does this matter, since we are still eating them? Should a vegetable say, "Thanks for the rights, Jacques?" as it is being spread over his steak tartar in thin slices, to

make a tasty accompaniment?

> J-LN: when you decide not to limit a potential "subjectivity" to man, why do you then limit yourself simply to the animal?
>
> JD: Nothing should be excluded.... The difference between 'animal' and 'vegetal' also remains problematic (106).

Corso sometimes looks half-heartedly to the American Indian for a philosophical answer to the dilemma, but only for laughs. The American Indians considered humans to be members of the same family as animals, making no crucial distinction between man and animal, even though they ate their brothers willingly. Does it matter if we treat animals and vegetables as brothers and sisters as long as we are still eating them, or does that just augment the horror? Can we return to that early table the Pilgrims were offered by the Indians and not laugh? Gregory Corso describes the collision of cultures in the Massachusetts Bay colony in his "Spontaneous Requiem for the American Indian": "Pilgrim blunderbuss, buckles, high hat, Dutch, English, pat-/ent leather shoes, Bible, pray... o but feast, turkey, corn, pumpkin, sweet confused happy hosty guests, Iriquois, Mohawk, Oneida, Onandaga, Thanks giving!" (*Elegiac Feelings American* 16). Can we make friends with the beings that we eat? After all, their brothers and sisters (termites, worms, etc.) in turn will eat us when we die. Corso opened this question and was aware of its difficulty some years before the major postmodern thinkers began dodging the question. In contrast to the easy righteousness of the ecological movement which shares the apparently common American Indian belief that animals willingly gave up their lives to be food for humans, it is obvious that humans are the narrators in this picture. (At an ecology and literature conference at the University of Wales, Swansea, in 1996, I was offered his interpretation of eating by a member of the conference after I had read an early version of this paper. Berries, one Australian woman said, happily give up their flesh so that the seeds could be deposited in fruitful feces. I recognized this line of thought from a previous encounter I'd had with Gary Snyder's poetry at a reading he'd given in Seattle. Other members of the conference leaped into the utopian vision, arguing that animals, too, like to offer themselves to hunters, happily giving their lives to feed the charming humans. All I can say is that I haven't seen this. In every case I have seen, the fleetest animals run like hell when humans chase them or else they hide in the bushes. I have hunted, and I have yet to see a deer walk up to me and roll over and smile. Perhaps they don't consider me worthy of this, which is fortunate because if they did, I couldn't consider killing such an animal using such an intelligent Gandhian tactic. Perhaps other hunters have this experience, but I have yet to see it, is all, and I haven't heard other hunters talk about it. The day animals come up with this tactic is the day even I would be forced to grant them full human rights. And If vegetables would say thank you for eating me, I couldn't do that, either. I don't know how ecological fundamentalists can eat things they consider to be nearly human. I would rather starve. Fortunately, from what I've been able to make out in safari films, however, the larger prey such as rhinos or crocodiles have thick armor, and big teeth, and counterattack if they are able. I have never seen an animal willingly give up its life to help humans, not even in the

most sentimental nature documentary. This happens in the minds of ecological fundamentalists, but nowhere else. Even berry bushes have spikes all over them to protect their fruit, so I don't think that even the bushes think of themselves as willingly giving up their fruit to the next shitter who stomps past).

Corso depicts man as a member of an obscene and comical animal world, and presents another aspect of Indians in "Spontaneous Requiem for the American Indian." At the end of the poem an Indian on a motorcycle screams into New York to sit at Horn & Hardart's with white women, and Corso writes, "O, he's an angle there/though sinister in shape of Steel Discipline smoking/ a cigarette in a fishy corner in the night..." (*Mindfield* 139). Corso doesn't buy the idea of Indians as angels of perfect ecological insight. After all, they too slaughtered the buffalo, as well as each other, before whites came, and when they came, they burned the white settlers, scalped them, and torched their houses. "Dust, hordes, tribes, death, blonde girls to die, gowns/ of ladies to burn, men of redcoats and bluecoats to/ die, boys to drum and fife and curse and cry and die,/ horses... to die, babies...to die", (139) in the miserable "battlefield of life" (265). The Indians lost, and in our general love for victims in the Maoist period in which we are living, all victims have taken on a saintly glow, and we are supposed to collectively wail over them, but they too had their sinister side. They were beaten by superior technology, and Corso is not at all sentimental about it, but simply realistic, just as Indian tribes before whites came slaughtered one another, and held each other as slaves and aren't exactly sorry about it. Corso in fact dismisses the Indian way of life as something worthy of study in his interview with Michael André.

> André: In many ways there is as much left to study in the American Indian civilization as in Greek civilization.
>
> Corso: Oh, not in architecture, anyway, except the pueblo. I would think the Indians had a better way of life, but... The Greeks could have had technology. The Renaissance picked up on that, through the Byzantine; Giotto learned the two dimensional Christ from the Byzantine (154).

Corso's bitter dismissal of the Turtle Island ecological world view does not offer any easy ethical answers, and is therefore difficult to digest, as he opens a public secret which everybody knows, but which it is taboo to mention. The western world was superior to the Indian world—in architecture, in art, in terms of its general level of comfort. The western viewpoint saw the world as composed of things, whereas the Indians were trapped in a world where everything, even trees and animals and tools, had subjectivity, and thus could not be used without some sense of respect. But how does one eat something respectfully? If someone were to eat me, I wouldn't care if they did it respectfully. What would it matter? Thanks to the ecology movement, western civilization is going back to this notion of everything as being imbued with a spirit. But for what good reason? We invite each other out to dinner, celebrate good times over food, and go happily to the grocery store, but we are rarely conscious that we are eating other beings. Would it be a better thing if we were to realize it? We can recognize and empathize with animals'

sufferings, and we can even find some signs of sentience in plants, but our lives are based on their exploitation. As the animal rights movement declares that all living beings are created equal, Corso's poetry will be increasingly relevant to describing and understanding the ethical dilemma that we face. The spiritual diaspora accepted in the western tradition beginning in Plato and continuing with the gnostic theologians, in which man is trapped here in an alien body, and on an alien planet, was an initial answer to the question of evil. They concluded there is evil on this earth because this is *not paradise*. Paradise was in Heaven. Early theologians sought to remove the animal aspects of man in order to recreate heaven on earth, and prepare us to go to heaven. Gregory Corso's poetry, by bringing the violent animal nature of man back into the center of the *polis*, opens up an ontological conduit which goes both ways. It challenges the dignity of man. Not only does "humanity" flow into animals; but "animality" flows into humanity.

Corso's western orientation is irreligious. He only accepts facts, the factual nature of the world, and sees it like a machine, engineered for comfort. He has much in common with postmodernist Gilles Deleuze who writes, "What is required is humor, as opposed to the Socratic irony or to the technique of the ascent" (*Logic* 135). "Deeper than any other ground is the surface and the skin... the tragic and the ironic give way to a new value, that of humor. For if irony is the co-extensiveness of being with the individual, or of the I with representation, humor is the co-extensiveness of sense with nonsense" (Logic 141). Deleuze concludes: "The values of humor are distinguished from those of [Socratic] irony: humor is the art of surfaces and the complex relations between the two surfaces" (*Logic* 248). Corso's writing is ahead of its time in America because it takes up the Nietzschean problem of a world without transcendent values. Without some standard which stands outside the whole system, there is no objective way to judge good and evil, and thus no reason to feel guilt, which Nietzsche saw as a leftover of the priestly mentality. From a biological viewpoint, ethics make no sense. Nietzsche writes against morality throughout his work as a tool of the priestly caste who "... concentrated their effort on arousing moral and religious responses, and the moral norm was vicariously invoked where by rights a powerful aesthetic magic should have transported the listeners" (*The Birth of Tragedy* 134-135). Nietzsche laughs explicitly at the "vegetarian absurdity" which had already swept Europe in his day, as a ramification of the growing guilt over the subjectivity of formerly objectified animals (267). The "face" of man, in Levinas' and Heidegger's sense, is for Corso merely a mask whose sole function is to hide his animal nature from himself. In his deconstruction of human subjectivity Corso closely parallels recent trends in French postmodern thought, but he goes further. I am arguing for reevaluation of Corso's poetry within the light of his anticipation and taking of these developments in French postmodernism to their furthest extreme. Aside from a few in-group appreciations from the likes of fellow Beats Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs,[3] Corso's writing has received scant critical attention, and much of this has been negative, and almost all of its has misunderstood or skimmed over Corso's intentions. Until recently, Corso has not fit into any of the reigning critical paradigms. His impiety has gotten him rejected from serious consideration. And yet, at least a decade

before Derrida and Deleuze, Corso interrogated all the transcendant economies of being, and found the exits blocked. The important puzzle of the ethics of eating has yet to be satisfactorily addressed by either the ecological movement or postmodern philosophy. If we are neighbors and not ontologically superior to the creatures we eat, the idea of ethics goes out the window when we're eating; and we must eat several times a day, or die. Corso's paradoxical poetry deals with this notion in a manner more profound and more vivid than anything yet written by Deleuze or Derrida. Corso knocked out the absurdity of an eternal God, and universal judgement, and impartial ethics years before postmodernism, but what are we left with? Mere cannibalism, without justification! For Corso it has meant that all of his early hopes for an ethical aesthetic reaction to the natural world were broken; his hopes as a utopian philosopher were dashed at the same time he was reborn as a no longer ebullient poet, but a tougher and a more realistic poet just the same. Corso's thinking led him to poetry, which is where he remained. Friedrich Nietzsche, the godfather of postmodernism, shows that art takes over where logic and science can go no further. Nietzsche writes, "Every noble and gifted man has, before reaching the mid-point of his career, come up against some part of the [scientific] periphery that defied his understanding, quite apart from the fact that we have no way of knowing how the area of the circle is over to be fully charted. When the inquirer, having pushed to the circumference, realizes how logic in that place curls about itself and bites its own tail, he is struck with a new kind of perception, which requires, to make it tolerable, the remedy of art" (*Birth of Tragedy* 95).

I would suggest the Buddhist ecological movement take a long hard look at the work of Gregory Corso, and forget Gary Snyder for a moment in their rush to love all creatures. Corso's poetry still has something to offer: which is the problematic of the subject. The question of subjectivity: who has it, and who doesn't, is not a simple matter of waving our hand and declaring rights for trees. It's a more serious mess than that, and Corso's work is the best illustration of this mess. In the aporia between the need for eating and respect for the other "logic curls about itself and bites its own tail." It is right here that Corso's art is centered. In the heart of immanence lies Corso's crowning curse: if humanity is animal, and has no transcendent soul, are ethics, then, just for laughs? Corso would say no. Because animals do not have imagination, they thus cannot change things, they do not have agency, in Luc Ferry's sense. In one of Corso's final poems in his Selected Poems he writes:

Fire Report – No Alarm

And that I did not adhere
to any man's God
neither a comprehensible
Absolute
nor the inexplicable
unseen breath
of Omnipotent power
— that I did indeed feel

the awesome lack
that in Heirophantic
ardour
is awesomely contained
and not fall to
my knees
in abject piety
or even for a failing
moment
give in
to the warmth
and secure
of God-embracement
—that I did not adhere
to arcane trinities
or bow to lettered
ambiguity
so that my soul
be stencilled
in wanton faith
—that I stood
amongst the brethren
and aided the old
and poor
as well the young
all for whom I
did open the door
like an act of Jesus
Such be my metaphor
Who with autochthonal
spirit
stands before the
universe alone
God-free
father of my children
and upon my finger
the ring of poetry—

(*Mindfield* 234-235)

This would indicate that Corso was not therefore willing to dispense with beauty, with love, with chivalry, simply because it makes no sense, as the more logical Nietzsche has seemingly done. Corso's implicit argument, which wavers, but which often comes

back quite strong, is that we can still have faith in ourselves and in our imaginations. If we can imagine a decent thing, then we can do it. Against nature, and nature's darkest inclinations, Corso posits the spirit of humor and imagination and hope. It isn't a program, but a matter of inspiration, of poetry.

Notes

[1]During a gathering of the Beats in Grand Forks, South Dakota, Corso is described by Allen Ginsberg rather insultingly as "the last Beatnik", (7), and Gary Snyder describes Corso as a "casualty" (23). along with Lew Welch and Jack Kerouac, as if Corso, too, had died, even though he was there at the conference! Corso is still living twenty five years after this comment by Snyder, but Snyder's remark shows that Corso's life and poetics were quite different from that of other members of the Beats. Snyder says, "We weren't high school dropouts. We were graduate school drop-outs – all of us" (9). Again this would exclude Corso, who audited some undergraduate classes at Harvard, but never received a high school diploma. He spent much of his teenage years in prisons and homes for wayward youth.

[2]Corso does still offer optimistic lyric efforts into the seventies, but the poems seem uninhabited and saccharine, as if even he himself does not believe in them. See "Sunrise" (*Mindfield* 166) or "Alchemy" (*Mindfield* 202).

[3]A short and largely complete summary of Corso criticism if offered in Gregory Stephenson's *Exiled Angle: A Study of the Work of Gregory Corso* (97).

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Big Houses, Small Politics: Public and Private Spaces in Anne Tyler's Fiction

ROBERT SCOTT STEWART

Anne Tyler has come under considerable criticism over the years for what some commentators have taken to be her anti-feminist views. One has to admit that Tyler herself has provided these critics with some ammunition. Fairly early in her career, in 1972,[1] Tyler said "I hate 'em all," in reference to "novels by liberated women" (Cited in Petry, 1994, 33). Expanding on the point a number of years later, she stated: "Certainly I don't hate liberated women as such. I assume I'm one myself, if you can call someone liberated who was never imprisoned" (cited in Petry, 1994, 33).

In "Still Just Writing" (Tyler, 1992), Tyler attempts in part to contextualize her political views within her writing, her life as a wife and mother, and her personal character by saying that:

> The only real trouble that writing has ever brought me is an occasional sense of being invaded by the outside world. Why do people imagine that writers, having chosen the most private of professions, should be any good at performing in public, or should have the slightest desire to tell their secrets to interviewers from ladies' magazines? ... I write my books and raise the children.... I know this makes me seem narrow, but in fact, I *am* narrow (Tyler, 1992, 33-34).

This *apologia* is not accepted by Susan Gilbert. While admitting that Tyler's primary focus is 'domestic life' rather than Politics, and that as a result "[c]ritics rightly refrain from complaining about what is absent from her work," Gilbert maintains that, beginning in the mid-eighties, Tyler has placed an increasing number of references to political events in her novels and that in so doing she presents the reader with a vision that "serves a static, politically conservative line on life, a nostalgic vision of an America of private houses and lawns" (Gilbert, 1990, 139). This, Gilbert concludes, is particularly troublesome since we may come away from Tyler's fiction with the lesson that life's difficulties are simply to be endured, and that with respect to "really changing things, there's little to be done" (Gilbert, 1990, 144).

I hope to defend Tyler against these sorts of criticisms. But I shall do so *not* by arguing that Tyler is in fact a radical feminist, long misinterpreted, for clearly she is no such thing. But neither, I believe, is she wholly conservative, in service to the patriarchal interests of men. Indeed, viewing Tyler's work in terms of a feminist-patriarchal conservative dichotomy is quite misleading. The confrontation within which Tyler functions is best seen as being between communitarianism and liberalism, with Tyler siding with some of the basic claims of the former. I shall attempt to establish in particular that Tyler denies a

fundamental point of contemporary liberalism—that an independent and unencumbered self can be autonomous in the Kantian sense of a noumenal self capable of escaping from the bounds of the phenomenal world which surrounds us. That is to say, liberalism assumes a pre-social self that can construct itself entirely through its radically free choices. Against this view, communitarianism has attempted to situate individuals *within* their social framework, and has argued that the individual is constituted by its web of relationships. Susan Sherwin (2000) calls this "relational autonomy" to contrast it with more traditional views of liberal autonomy. It is this relational sort of autonomy that, I believe, is the sort of autonomy expressed and endorsed by Tyler's characters, and the happiness they seek (and to whatever extent possible, attain) is a kind of "relational happiness."

Before turning to Tyler's fiction, I begin in the first section by setting out some of the philosophical parameters of my essay, particularly with respect to various conceptions of autonomy.

1. Communitarianism, Feminism, and Relational Autonomy

Autonomy became a preeminent value during the Enlightenment. As Immanuel Kant expressed it: "*Sapere Aude*! 'Have courage to use your own reason!' That is the motto of the enlightenment" (Kant, 1959, 85). Kant thought of autonomy as the ability to use one's own reason, freed from influences such as superstition and dogma either of the state or the Church. Emanating from this Kantian ideal of autonomy sprang the *political* ideal of liberalism expressed so well a hundred years later by John Stuart Mill when he claimed that: "...the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection... In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign" (Mill, 1974, 68).

Classical liberalism, then, argued for a policy of state non-interference in the 'private' lives of individuals. That is, a barrier was erected between 'private choice', which was to be at the discretion of individuals, and 'public matters', which affected others—or "harmed" them, as Mill's "harm principle" expressed it—and over which the state had a legitimate interest. Oftentimes, this *political* ideal of autonomy has become conflated (both by liberals and their opponents) with autonomy *in general*. As Gerald Dworkin has pointed out, this can lead to confusion, for autonomy functions as a *moral* and *social* ideal as well as a political one (Dworkin, 1988,10). Hence, for example while we may be able to agree, in terms of a political goal, upon the propriety of the state refraining from imposing any particular view of the good life on its citizens, it would be a mistake to think that people, as social beings, can choose outside any and all influences. As Dworkin puts it, there is no "unchosen chooser, no uninfluenced influencer" (Dworkin, 1988, 12). To think otherwise is to confuse *political* autonomy with *social* autonomy. We cannot, then, *contra* Kant, be obligated to invent the law entirely by ourselves for this would disavow our nature as social (and genetic) beings who are at least partially determined by these factors.

That we are, to a large extent, products of our nature and environment and that we can still make free choices is the germinal idea of some feminists, such as Susan Sherwin,

in their discussions of autonomy. It is not to be viewed, she contends, as the 'free choice' of some unencumbered, abstract, perfectly rational and self-creating being. People are much 'messier' than that. One of the things that feminism has taught us, she says, is that we exist in a world of relationships with others, and that these relationships, and the choices we make within the context they provide, is what constitutes our identity. Failure to see this will result, for example, in a failure to see the various ways in which women are oppressed: indeed, Sherwin argues, following Michel Foucault, that "in modern societies the illusion of choice can be part of the mechanism for controlling behavior" (Sherwin, 2000, 74). By conceiving of selfhood as relational, we can see the self "as an ongoing process, rather than as something static or fixed. Relational selves are inherently social beings that are significantly shaped and modified within a web of interconnected (and sometimes conflicting) relationships" (Sherwin, 200. 78).

Communitarianism appears to share this feature of the self as relational in common with feminism (even though, as Marilyn Friedman and others have pointed out, the two positions are not entirely friendly (Friedman, 1991)). Like Sherwin, the communitarian Charles Taylor has argued against the liberal view of the self as inadequate. He maintains that the liberal view presents us with what he calls a "disengaged self" which, though seemingly free to construct any view of the good life, paradoxically finds itself unable to articulate any substantive view of the good. In a passage reminiscent of Sherwin, he suggests that we must come to realize that "identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I ought to endorse or oppose" (Taylor, 1989, 27). Without such a framework, individual persons have a tendency to experience a "loss of resonance, depth, [and] richness" in our lives (Taylor, 1991, 6).

Persons, that is, need to have a grounding in their lives: such grounding is most typically found in the contemporary world in our close relationships, particularly with our families and in our homes. But herein lies a paradox: first, because women have historically been restricted to the confines of the home, and second, because liberalism has traditionally defined the home as falling within the purview of the "private sphere" where the individual is supposed to be sovereign, and hence outside of state regulation and interference. As a result, a lot of harm has been perpetrated against women—e.g., spousal abuse—that liberalism traditionally has not perceived as such. This has led feminists to argue for state intervention in abusive relationships regardless of the official relationship between the parties concerned and irrespective of where the crime has occurred. On a different but related front, feminists of course have also argued for women to have the freedom to work outside the home in an increasing array of professions.

As mentioned earlier, however, Tyler has never felt herself "imprisoned at home:" in fact, she has admitted to the contrary that she loathes *leaving* home (Tyler, 1992). In fact, though, Tyler is highly ambivalent about home and the constraints it imposes, and of leaving home and the promises of freedom such travel provides. On a personal note, she admits that though she hates to travel: "Yet , I'm continually prepared for travel: it is

physically impossible for me to buy any necessity without buying a travel-sized version as well. I have a little toilet kit, with soap and a nightgown, forever packed and ready to go. How do you explain that" (Tyler, 1992, 34)?

This ambiguity toward travel and home—between the private and public spheres of life—appears repeatedly, almost obsessively, in Tyler's fiction, a point made dismissively by some critics who complain that the plots of Tyler's novels can be summarized as "...in one book characters run away and then come home, in the next come home and then run away" (Gilbert, 1990, 141). These critics miss the point, however, that John Updike captures when he says that Tyler's work deals with the "fundamental American tension ... between stasis and movement, between home and escape" (Updike, 1992, 89). Indeed, to take this one step further, I suggest that in her fiction Tyler deconstructs the traditional assumption of home as private and the rest of the (traditionally male) world as public by showing the ways in which the traditional dichotomy fails to recognize important features of all of our lives. This is that relationships are the focal point of *all* our lives and that the liberal ideal of leaving home in order to express one's radical freedom is largely a fiction. Hence, the liberal notion of a transcendent autonomy from our everyday world is misguided.

2. Houses, Identity, and Men Who Leave Home

Janis Stout has argued that "Tyler identifies the self with its home, specifically with a house (Stout, 1998, 105). As a result, Tyler often opens her narratives with reference to the home of one the novel's central characters. For example, her first novel, *If Morning Ever Comes* (1964) opens, "When Ben Joe Hawkes left home." *Earthly Possessions* (1977) begins with Charlotte Emory's claim that, "The marriage wasn't going well, and I decided to leave home." The opening paragraph of *The Accidental Tourist* (1985) describes Macon and Sarah Leary driving home, having cut short their beach vacation. *Saint Maybe* (1991) opens by noting the way in which various houses on the protagonist's street are identified with their occupants (and vice-versa):

> [E]ach house had its own particular role to play. Number Nine, for instance, was foreign. A constantly shifting assortment of Middle Eastern graduate students came and went ... Number Six was referred to as the newlyweds', although the Crains had been married two years now and were beginning to look a little worn around the edges. And Number Eight was the Bedloe family. They were never just the Bedloes, but the Bedloe *family*, Waverly Street's version of the ideal, apple-pie household. (*Saint Maybe*, 465[2]).

In this section, I discuss Macon Leary from *The Accidental Tourist* and Morgan Gower of *Morgan's Passing* (1980). I do this not only because both men are defined in terms of their relationship to their home(s), but also because they both leave home to seek a freedom unavailable to them if they stay. On the surface, such narrative lines would seem to offer support for feminist criticisms of Tyler and evidence against my view that no one—men as well as women—can escape the context of their relationships and make choices outside their parameters. As we shall see, however, when examined closely, despite leaving home and undergoing personal transformations, neither Macon nor Morgan really leave their old lives behind entirely.

Macon and Sarah Leary have had a son murdered by a complete stranger in a senseless, random act of violence: they both harbor resentment towards their spouse as a result of this incident and they are incapable, it seems, of moving past this event in their lives. Eventually, Sarah leaves Macon. After she does so, Macon moves from his marital home back to the obsessive, but for him comforting, order of his natal grandparent's house. This is a symbolic move back to the womb for Macon, and eventually, it allows for a rebirth of sorts since when he later becomes involved with an eccentric dog trainer named Muriel Pritchard, he is able to choose to leave his natal home to go to the dishevelment of Muriel's apartment in a run-down section of central Baltimore. Clearly, this choice is important, indeed determinate, in the construction of his self. Although Macon does return once again to his wife and to their marital home, he in the end chooses Muriel. All of this 'wandering about', has led at least one commentator to draw comparisons between Macon and Homer's Odysseus (English, 1994). In suggesting this, English implicitly categorizes Macon with tradition male figures who move freely through life in separation from their family. Stout (1998) argues, however, that Odysseus is not a fruitful heuristic for Macon and *The Accidental Tourist*. "Macon is not *kept* from home as Odysseus is, and if it is Sarah, his legal wife, who represents the faithful Penelope, having remained (so she says) chaste during their separation, it was she, after all, who first left—scarcely the act of Penelope" (Stout, 1998, 137). Deciding to leave Sarah for Muriel, then, is not simply another instance of a male fling followed by a return home.

For some, home is mere stasis. In fact, Sarah essentially tells Macon just this when explaining to him why she had returned and why she felt that the two of them belonged together: "Macon, I think that after a certain age people just don't have a choice... You're who I'm with. It's too late for me to change. I've used up too much of my life now" (*The Accidental Tourist*, 310). Macon comes to see eventually, that Sarah is mistaken. While one always chooses from a certain context which forms a certain set of constraints regarding choice, this does not mean that one can't choose change at all even though, as Macon tells Sarah when he leaves her for Muriel that it's "not the easy way out" (*The Accidental Tourist*, 352). Indeed, Tyler herself found the choice difficult. As she noted in a 1989 interview with Alice Hall Petry, "I wrote an entire final chapter in which Macon stayed with Sarah and then realized I couldn't do it—not only because it spoiled the dramatic line of the plot but also because it meant [Macon] abandoning [Muriel's son] Alexander" (cited in English, 1994, 160). Macon, then, is *not* running away from responsibility; rather, he is moving *toward* them. As Susan Kissel (1996, Ch.3) has pointed out, Tyler's characters, both male and female, like to feel needed. Hence, when leaving Sarah, Macon tells her that she doesn't need him while, at Muriel's, he says, "[t]here was so much that needed fixing" (*The Accidental Tourist*, 235). So, Macon's new life and his new identity are not established as a *tabula rasa*; rather, Macon, who, it is implied, will retain some sort of relationship with Sarah, will also be shaped by new sets of relationships and responsibilities with Muriel and Alexander. These apparently 'private' choices, then, actually have a 'public' dimension.

Like Macon, Morgan Gower of *Morgan's Passing* (1980) too has to make a choice

between two women, both of whom are identified with their homes. His wife Bonnie and he have lived in a rambling, slightly run-down, but still stately house in the exclusive older section of Baltimore called Roland Park, while Emily Meredith, lives in a small apartment of stark, minimalist simplicity.[3] Indeed, as Frank Shelton (1990) observes, their choices are inversions of the other: while the orderly Macon dreams of a less structured existence, the wildly eccentric and unpredictable Morgan dreams of a more orderly life. For both, however, their dreams can be met only by leaving their homes and setting out elsewhere. As we shall see, just as there are strong remnants of Macon's old life in his new, so too will Morgan's past remain to some extent in his present and future.

Although Morgan loved his wife, he admits that he "had married his wife for her money" (*Morgan's Passing*, 31). But there was something beyond money itself that attracted him; namely, the "large and formal and gracious" (*Morgan's Passing*, 30) house to which Bonny was attached. It was that combination of money and house that, Morgan thought, gave Bonny a certain "definiteness". Unlike Morgan, who is a sort of human chameleon constantly changing personalities as well as outfits, Bonny "was so clear about who she was" that she made Morgan feel "securely defined at last" (*Morgan's Passing*, 31).

> Things do not remain so defined forever, however.
>
> Something had gone terribly wrong both with his marriage and with his home: Fool house. Cabinets ... stuffed with tarnished silver tea services and dusty stemware that no one ever used. Jammed in front of them were ketchup bottles and cereal boxes and summer plastic salt and pepper sets with rice grains in the salt from last summer when everything had stuck to itself. Fool house! Something had gone wrong with it ... (*Morgan's Passing*, 30).

Morgan now begins to fall in love with Emily, ironically for reasons which both mirror and contrast with his initial attraction to Bonny. Once again it has do with a house (or, in this case, apartment) but now, with Emily, Morgan is attracted to minimalism and to stark simplicity, which Morgan now hopes will simplify his life. Hence, Morgan is attracted to Emily's organizational skills which he, e.g., associates with her purse: "you could live in the wilderness for a month off that purse ... a ball of string, a roll of Scotch tape, her Swiss Army knife, a pair of needle-nosed pliers" (*Morgan's Passing*, 285). He also loves the fact that she is ready to leave at any moment. "'I'm even packed,' she said, 'or half-packed. I've been packed for years. These clothes are so foldable and non-crushable, they take up a single drawer and they'd fit with no trouble at all in the suitcase in the closet. I've worked it so I could grab my bag up at any time and go" (*Morgan's Passing*, 260). Ironically, however, Emily loves Morgan for his 'hominess': for example, as she tells Bonny, "It must be wonderful ... to have him with you all the time, fixing things" (232). And, unlike Morgan, Emily loves it when her apartment overflows with 'stuff' once Morgan has moved in with her.

> Trunks and dress forms, a rusty birdcage, barrels containing a gigantic cup-and-saucer collection muffled in straw, stacks of *National Geographics*, Brindle's catalogs, Louisa's autograph book, a samovar, a carton of records,

a lady's bicycle, a wicker elephant. And this was only what lined the hall, which had once been empty as a tunnel. ...

In Gina's room there was almost no floor—just a field of bureaus and unmade beds. ...

Emily loved it all.

She began to understand why Morgan's daughters kept coming home when they had to convalesce from something. You could draw vitality from mere objects, evidently ... (*Morgan's Passing*, 300-301)

Paradoxically, then, Morgan married for a home stability that, once achieved, eventually wears him out. He then seeks simplicity in its stead, but moves his complicated life, including his senile mother, eccentric sister, and old dog, along with tons of material things (furniture, clothes, etc.) into his new life with Emily. Morgan, then, has a complex relationship with houses, things, and people. Somehow, however, the new mix seems to work for him since at the end of novel, though his given up his good job, his stylish house in the upscale Roland Park neighborhood of Baltimore, and his wife and family in order live in a trailer traveling around the countryside performing puppet shows, Morgan has managed to some small degree to attain the stability he dreamed of initially with Bonny. "He started smiling. By the time he reached Emily, he was humming. Everything he looked at seemed luminous and beautiful, and rich with possibilities" (*Morgan's Passing*, 346).

So Morgan, like Macon, finds that he has to leave his house in order to continue productively with his life. This might well leave the impression that men must leave home in order to complete themselves. Yet Tyler gives no indication that she thinks this is the case. For one thing, there are male characters in Tyler's works whom do not leave home. For example, Ezra Tull in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, remains at home his entire life, never even changing his boyhood bed, wall posters, and so on. And it is he, as opposed to his sister, who takes on the traditional female responsibility of bringing the family together for special occasions family dinner (even though they almost all fail miserably). And in *Saint Maybe,* Ian Bedloe remains home and occupies the traditional maternal role to raise his orphaned nieces and nephew.

Moreover, as we have seen, even though Macon and Morgan both leave their wives and their homes, they do not do so for the traditionally or stereotypically male (or patriarchal) reason of avoiding responsibilities. Macon leaves to be with another woman and to care for her son. And Morgan brings all sorts of responsibilities along with him as well, including the birth of a new child after his have all grown. For men, then, as for women, there is no completely dissociated 'freedom' for Tyler's characters. And those men, like the father Beck Tull in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant,* who do attempt to run away completely, are looked upon with complete disdain.

3. Traveling (but Returning) Women

I turn now to a consideration of Charlotte Emory of *Earthly Possessions* and Delia Grinstead of *Ladder of Years*, two female characters within Tyler's work who, like Macon and Morgan, leave their homes and families. Unlike the two men, however, Charlotte and

Delia end up returning. I shall argue that despite this difference Tyler does not present return to home as the only viable option for women.

Charlotte's dissatisfaction with home revolves around what is, for her, its stultifying clutter, both of the people her husband Saul brings into the home and the various pieces of furniture he fills it with: "an end table in front of another end table, a sofa backed against the first. It was crazy. Every piece of furniture had a shadow, a Siamese twin" (*Earthly Possessions*, 100-101). Charlotte seeks the stark simplicity that Morgan had found so enticing about Emily's apartment in *Morgan's Passing*. Hence, she sees as her project the "casting off encumbrances, paring down to the bare essentials, stripping for the journey." Indeed, she adds, "My only important belonging since I have grown up is a pair of excellent walking shoes" (*Earthly Possessions*, 37: also see Shelton, 1990). But it's not only physical possessions that Charlotte conceptualizes as encumbrances, and seeks to cast off: "A husband is another encumbrance... And children even more so... I would have liked to strip myself of friends, too. I was pleased when I lost any friends" (*Earthly Possessions*, 37).

So Charlotte runs away: significantly, as she is doing so, she is kidnapped. This seems to suggest that try as we might, we are not able to effect that which Charlotte dreams of—a complete disengagement from the world, including all relationships. This would not produce the hoped for new person, but a *non-person*. This is perhaps why Tyler displays Charlotte as one who, despite her stated desires, has relationships stick to her like burrs: in fact, she eventually becomes friendly even with her kidnapper Jake and his pregnant girlfriend (see Stout, 1998, 131). Ironically, it is Jake who points out to Charlotte the error of her aspirations of escape in one of his rare moments of insight: "I believe," he says, "any time you see someone running, it's their old, faulty self they're running from." (*Earthly Possessions*, 157).

Having come to this realization, Charlotte returns home. Some, particularly feminist critics, such as Alice Petry Hall, are dissatisfied with this resolution. Charlotte's return, Hall maintains, is yet "another manifestation of her capacity to be passive... Charlotte returns, after all, to a less-than-satisfying marriage in a home which ... brings with it the weight of several generations of misery and guilt. Further, there is no indication that she will ever be anything more than a housekeeper who moonlights as a photographer... What was meant to be a "happy" resolution to *Earthly Possessions* is thus oddly unsettling" (Petry, 1994, 38).

Stout, however, provides a different interpretation. According to her, although Charlotte returns, she does so on her own terms. Her life may be identified with home, but she has come to reconstruct herself through her travels and has begun to take possession of her life. That is, "going back may be a going forward" because the person returning may have become a different person (Stout, 1998,131, 119). As Charlotte expresses it to Saul at the end of the novel: "We have been traveling for years, traveled all our lives, we are traveling still. We couldn't stay in one place if we tried" (*Earthly Possessions*, 200). Stout is, I believe, quite correct in making this important point. It has a point that has been

made often enough in various contexts. For example, Wordsworth makes it in the *Prelude* when he says that though we "had hopes that pointed to the clouds," these hopes and dreams can never be attained by the finite possibilities available within this world. This is true of all of us, not just of women, even though women living in a patriarchal and oppressive world will have fewer sources of choice and diminished chances for happiness than men not so oppressed. So I agree with Petry that the ending of *Earthly Possessions* is as unsettling as it is happy. But this surely is part of Tyler's point. Just as Charlotte learns that she cannot escape all relationships and retain her personhood, and that her autonomy is relational, not 'absolute' in a way which disavows both her past and the web of relationships that constitutes her (and, by extension, all of us), so too she comes to learn that her happiness is relational as well. But relationships themselves are neither perfectly good or bad. But they are the paradigm within which we live and find value in our lives. For some, that means moving on, but for others, like Charlotte, physical or geographical travel is brief and comes with the realization that we can change wherever we are, even though a trip away may be necessary for us to realize this. In the end, then, we come to make whatever changes we can within the context provided by our identity and our situation. Although this is not an ideal prelapsarian state, it is an ideal nonetheless, but one tempered by recognition of the reality of people's lives. Delia Grinstead of *A Ladder of Years* (1995) makes a similar point when she comments upon the difference between her life and the life of the women who populate the romance novels she is so fond of reading. "Real life continues past the end" of these novels, she claims: "Never ... would those women ... need to give a thought to the grinding years of daily life – the leaky basements, the faulty oven, the missing car keys... (*Ladder of Years*, 210). Tyler presents no Pollyanna picture: this does not make her anti-feminist, however.

Besides never having moved from their birth homes, Charlotte and Delia share the odd feature that their family incomes are dependent upon their homes (a feature also shared by Rebecca Davitch who I examine in the following section). Charlotte runs a photographic studio on the first floor of her home, a profession that she had taken over from her father. Delia's situation is more indirect: her husband, Dr. Sam Grinstead, takes over the home office and practice of Delia's father who was also a physician. Indeed, part of the concern that Delia begins to have about her life concerns this last point when she begins to wonder if Sam married her primarily for her father's "nice, comfortable old home" and the practice contained therein (*Ladder of Years*, 218). That is, Delia wonders, as Macon and Morgan both wondered, whether she is a useful partner in her marriage or a mere superfluous ornament to it.

Hence, though the novel opens in typical Tyler fashion with a homey reference, the novel turns quickly to attend to underlying problems: "This all started on a Saturday morning in May, one of those warm spring days that smell like clean linen" (*Ladder of Years*, 191[4]). Spring, of course, is a time of change and hence while the opening line makes reference to the comfort of home, it also hints at changes to come. Sam, now suffering from angina, is in the process of getting himself and the house in shape. '"I don't know what's come

over that man,' Delia said. 'He's been re—what's the word? – rejuvenating, resuscitating ... renovating, I mean: renovating this house to a fare-thee well'" (*Ladder of Years*, 203). Delia too, at least subconsciously, desires change as dull routine begins to stultify her: "What kind of life was she leading," she muses, "if every single one of last week's telephone messages could as easily be this week's" (*Ladder of Years*, 219).

Although Delia flirts with the idea of having an affair, she realizes that, as her husband points out, "[y]ou're not exactly the type to have an affair" (*Ladder of Years*, 248). Having *him* point this out, however, leads Delia to leave him, although neither he nor the rest of the family notices right away. In fact, Delia herself is unaware she has left until after she has completed doing so. Interestingly, she 'escapes' in an RV. Delia, never have seen one before, is enthralled with the idea of a home that moves: "I'd have nothing ... interfering, so at a moment's notice I could hop behind the wheel and go. Travel with my house on my back, like a snail" (*Ladder of Years*, 252). [5]

Eventually, she settles at a boarding house in the small town of Bay Borough in a room that delights her because there was "not the slightest hint that anybody lived there" (*Ladder of Years*, 267). But as she settles, she realizes how easy it is to slip back into old modes of existence:

> Funny how life contrived to build up layers of *things* around a person. Already she had that goose necked lamp, because the overhead bulb had proved inadequate for reading in bed; and she kept a stack of paper cups and a box of teabags on her closet floor, making do till now with hot water from the bathroom faucet; and it was becoming clear she needed a second dress. Last night, the first really warm night of summer, she had thought, *I should buy a fan.* Then she had told herself, *Stop. Stop while you're ahead* (*Ladder of Years*, 270).

Delia works hard at her 'project ': she "avoids conversation as much as possible." And speaking of her landlady in particular, she notes: "Heaven forbid they should get to be cozy, chatty lady friends, exchanging news of their workdays every evening" (*Ladder of Years*, 277). But she slowly comes to realize that it is not possible to attain complete isolation: it's impossible to be a completely unencumbered self. What she wants really, she later comes to recognize when writing a note to her mother-in-law is "*beginning again from scratch*" (*Ladder of Years*, 303)." Tyler captures the impossibility and the childishness of such an aspiration, however, when she has the mother-in-law reply: *"[W]hen you're finished starting over, do you picture working up to the present again, and coming home*? (*Ladder of Years*, 307). One's past cannot be abandoned however much we might wish at times that it could. This is brought out wonderfully in the novel by having Delia tracked down by her sister Eliza because there is an old, almost forgotten, family connection to Bay Borough: indeed, many of the streets are named after relatives, and a forbear actually knew the founder of the town.

But Delia refuses to return home. She manages, however, symbolically to move her old home to her new place of residence by becoming a 'live-in housekeeper' to a recently

separated man, and his twelve-year-old boy (an age before which, Delia muses, children "stopped being thrilled to see you coming" (*Ladder of Years*, 294). That is, Delia becomes in Bay Borough what she was back in Roland Park, Baltimore, a wife and a mother. One could argue that since Delia becomes what she always was, she, like Charlotte, fails to move on. But this would miss the fact that Delia has repositioned herself in her new life. She is no longer a silly and flighty middle-aged woman who never really grew up. In Bay Borough, unlike in Roland Park, Delia becomes a competent and wise woman who people turn to for advice and feel they cannot live without: "she seemed to have changed into someone else—a woman people looked to automatically for sustenance (*Ladder of Years*, 365)

Eventually, however, parental responsibilities send Delia physically back home in order to attend the wedding of her daughter, Susie. Almost immediately, she finds herself needed since a crisis is in process. The house itself gives a hint of this upon her arrival. Just forty minutes before the wedding is due to begin, it is almost "empty" and not "very welcoming" (*Ladder of Years*, 418). Susie, Delia finds out, is refusing to get married and Delia is called upon to patch things up between Susie and her finance, Driscoll. What the crisis is and how Delia manages to resolve it are not particularly germane to this discussion. What is relevant, however, is that not only does Delia resolve the crisis, she is *expected* to do so by her family. Delia has changed as a result of her travels, but so has her family as they come to perceive her in new ways, most particularly as a grown and capable woman. Hence, the resolution between she and Sam is not as insipid as some have taken it to be.[6] Sam, clearly searching for the right thing to say, blurts out, "Was there anything that would, you know. Would persuade you to come back?" to which Delia responds, "Oh Sam. All you had to do was ask" (*Ladder of Years*, 459). That is to say, Sam had to come to the realization that Delia was not a superfluous ornament in their life together, that she was no longer the little frivolous girl that he had proposed to but a mature woman, wife, and mother. Simply asking her to return, then, is not as easy as it may seem for it requires in Sam a change in perception towards his wife.

Delia perceives things differently as well. This comes out in a passage delivered by Nat, the grandfather of Noel who is the boy she had been caring for in Bay Borough. An elderly and rather sick man, Nat has recently remarried, and he and his much younger bride are expecting a child. For Nat, this attempt at a return to a former part of one's life is perhaps not going to turn out well, but things are different for Delia. "It had *all* been a time trip—all this past year and a half. Unlike Nat's, though, hers had been a time trip that worked. What else would you call it when she'd ended up back where she started, home with Sam for good? When the people she had left behind had actually traveled further, in some ways" (*Ladder of Years*, 460).

> Just before Delia's reconciliation with Sam, Nat delivers the following long speech at dinner which makes a similar point to one I made earlier in reference to the end of *Earthly Possessions*. The passage speaks to the matter of the extent to which there is a happy resolution to *Ladder of Years*There's a picture

> I'm reminded of that he took towards the end of his life. Shows his dining-room table set for Christmas dinner. Savage himself sitting amongst the empty chairs, waiting for his family. Chair after chair after chair, silverware laid just so, even a baby's high chair, all in readiness. And I can't help thinking, when I look at that photo, *I bet that's as good as it got that day. From there on out, it was all downhill, I bet.* Actual sons and daughters arrived, and they quarreled over the drumsticks and sniped at their children's table manners and brought up hurtful incidents from fifteen years before; and the baby had this whimper that gave everybody a headache. Only just for that moment ... just as the shutter was clicking, none of that had happened yet, you see, and the table looked so beautiful, like someone's dream of a table, and old Savage felt so—what's the word I want, so—... anticipatory (*Ladder of Years*, 455).

Part of the maturation process, it would seem—and part of the lesson that the travelers in Tyler's work must come to learn, is that their happiness, along with their choices, will never be absolutely satisfying. This is not to say that people need simply to endure their lot in life, for neither Delia nor Charlotte does that. In Delia's case especially, family members change as well as Delia, but that is still not to say that life will match childish expectations. Tyler is, above all, a novelist of middle age: she realizes the extent to which our happiness and our choices are remnants of life as actually lived.

4. Grownup Lives

"Once upon a time, there was a woman who discovered she had turned into the wrong person" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 1). So begins Tyler's most recent narrative, *Back When We Were Grownups.* It is the story of Rebecca Davitch, a fifty-three year old widow, step/mother, grandmother and caretaker of her deceased husband's ninety-nine year old uncle. Significantly, Rebecca's maiden name is Holmes, for homes and houses play a focal role in her life. Like Charlotte and Delia before her, Rebecca feels trapped in her home, yet, as we shall see, she is able to discover that she belongs there without physically having to move away.

Part of Rebecca's initial discomfort with the house she lives in—an "ornate but rumbling nineteenth-century Baltimore row house, with its two high- ceilinged parlors, front and rear, its antiquated backyard kitchen connected to the dining room by an afterthought of a passageway, its elaborate carved moldings and butterfly-parquet floors and seven sculptured marble mantelpieces overhanging seven fireplaces, five of them now defunct"—is that she thinks of it as "the Davitches house, not hers" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 23).

Like the house, Rebecca too has past her youth. Despite their flaws, however, Rebecca still manages to muster enough appeal out of the house—under dim lighting and sufficient accessories—to have it function as "the Open Arms," a place to host all "Occasions from the Cradle to the Grave," according to the publicity they advertise about their business" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 23). Ironically, there is nothing at all open about either the family. Despite being 'professional hosts' for over half a century, the Davitches failed

utterly in thinking that

> ...the Open Arms existed simply to provide a physical space .... What they hadn't understood was that almost as important was an invisible oiling of the gears, so to speak: pointing one person toward the liquor and another person away from it, finding a chair for an elderly aunt or loading her plate or fetching her sweater, calming an overexcited child, signaling to the DJ to lower the volume, stepping in to fill an awkward silence.... (*Back When We Were Grownups,* 56-57).

The reason for their mistake, in part, is that the Davitches are a rather mean spirited lot who are inward turning by nature and who much prefer private to public space. We get a sense of this very early in the novel, which opens with an engagement picnic organized by Rebecca for her youngest stepdaughter, NoNo. In a fashion typical for them, all parts of the Davitch family ignoring each other, and indeed, their cars are circling "the meadow like covered wagons braced for attack" (*Back When We Were Grownups* 1). It is Rebecca who has to coax them into any sort of familial activity.

This is ironic, not to say disheartening, according to Rebecca because she sees herself as shy, reserved, bookish, and private sort of person, not the bubbling 'party hostess' she has become. In her youth, she had been a serious young scholar who had been 'pre-engaged' to another serious young scholar, and both of them had plans to enter the academy, she as Professor of American History and he as Professor of Physics. But her life has taken a radical turn. "She had once been so political! She had picketed the Macadam cafeteria on behalf of its underpaid workers; she had marched against the war in Vietnam; she had plastered the door of her dorm room with anti-nuclear stickers." Now, however, "she could barely bring herself to vote. All she read was Anne Landers and her horoscope. Her eyes slid over Kosovo and Rwanda and hurried on" (*Back When We Were Grownups,*156).

Rebecca, that is, appears to have lost her old and 'private' self which she comes to think of as "her true real life," opposes this life to her "her fake real life," i.e., the life she actually lives (*Back When We Were Grownups,* 94). Her (now deceased husband) Joe, she comes to think, "swept [her] off [her] feet... a fully grown man, someone who already had his life in order, was already *living* his life" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 152). She and Will, in contrast, had merely been preparing for it, or worse yet, just playing at it. Her transition to real, adult life was swift, however, as she became not only a wife, but also a stepmother of three young girls (and soon to be a mother as well) in addition to acting as caretaker for an aging mother-in-law and uncle. Increasingly, as well, she is called upon to take the lead in the business of *The Open Arms,* which the Davitches are constitutionally ill-suited for. "It seemed," she said, "I got onto a whole different path, got farther and farther away from my original self." Rebecca thinks, however, that she is awaking from a long period of disingenuous life to realize that she is "an imposter in her own life" or, in other words, as she puts it: "It's *not* my life. It's somebody else's" (*Back When We Were Grownups* 152). Thus begins Rebecca's attempt to realize her 'old, true life': she begins subtly to disengage from her family, to research on her old B.A. thesis, subscribes to *The*

Grownups 152). Thus begins Rebecca's attempt to realize her 'old, true life': she begins subtly to disengage from her family, to research on her old B.A. thesis, subscribes to *The New York Times Book Review*, and attempts to renew her relationship with her former fiancé, Will.

Despite the initial attractiveness of the thought of this former life, she comes eventually to realize that there were good reasons for having left Will. He is a plodding man, rigidly stuck to an unchangeable routine. This is a man, after all, who cooks only chili, making enough each Sunday to be stored in separate containers for the six following suppers through the week. In grand understatement when he declines a salad containing hearts of palm, he says: "I'm not all that much for experiment" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 247). As Poppy says of the family photo album, Will thinks that Rebecca and her family have "no order... Everything's jumbled up" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 253). She also discovers that Will is given to a rather peculiar brand of snobbishness: he thinks it inappropriate that Rebecca is friends with the people who help her in her attempt to keep the Open Arms actually open for business—her plumber, carpenter, and so on. Hence, when her brother-in-law, Zeb, tells her, "It's never too late to do what you want to do" in life, she responds indignantly: "What? ... Well, of all the—Why, that's just plain wrong" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 261). Life is not, she comes to realize, completely undefined, completely open. As she discovers that she actually loves the bothersome Poppy (after realizing that he has not suffered a stroke or heart attack), she also comes to the discovery that: "Apparently, you grow to love whom you're handed" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 176).

Rebecca had wanted simply to believe that she was free to choose her life completely, and that her life would add up to something of public significance, or as she puts it: "she had just wanted to believe, she supposed, that there were grander motivations in history than mere family and friends, mere domestic happenstance" (261). This realization is of course disappointing for Rebecca, as it is for the rest of us. But the realization also brings with it the further recognition that relationships are not something that can be blocked off and placed into a separate corner of our lives. According to Tyler, and to the proponents of communitarianism, those relationships actually constitute the *whole* of us. Rebecca expresses this idea toward the end of the novel: "Some people," she says, "had experiences in their pasts that define them forever after... The loss of a child, for example... For Rebecca, it was the fact of her instant motherhood. That had been the most profound change in her life; it had made her understand that this *was* her life, for real, and not some story floating past" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 264). From a global perspective, this can be depressing since all of us must realize, as Rebecca does, that "none of her little world's events had really been that important," (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 265) but as Poppy says, "your true life is the one you end up with" (*Back When We Were Grownups*, 283).

Notes

[1]Her first novel, If *Morning Ever Comes*, was published in 1964 when she was just 23 years old.

[2]References to this novel are taken from *Anne Tyler: Three Completed Novels. A Patchwork Planet, Ladder of Years* and *Saint Maybe*, 1998, 1995, 1991.

[3]As Susan Gilbert (1990) and others have pointed out, Tyler's charactes often become happier when making a social and economic 'downward' move from wealth and leisure.

[4]References to this novel are taken from *Anne Tyler: Three Completed Novels, A Patchwork Planet, Ladder of Years* and *Saint Maybe*, 1998, 1995, 1991.

[5]This would be open up interesting possibility for the tension Updike mentioned between stasis and movement.

[6]Stout, e.g., sees the entire novel as "pointlessly repetitive" (Stout, 1998, 138).

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Review Essay

Circumference as the Center towards an Understanding of the Dynamic Self

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Dr. V.K. Chari, *Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964, pp. 176.

The day of days, the great day of the feast of life is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity in things. (Emerson)

From Emerson's "Oversoul", "Compensations", "Illusions", "Plato" and "Brahma" to Whitman's "Song of Myself "through Thoreau's "Walden," Transcendentalism in America has been profoundly influenced by the Vedantic doctrine that the immutable self (*ātman*) is identifiable with the Universal Brahman. To Emerson, the fundamental unity entails the ecstasy of losing all being in 'one Being' (Plato), whereas Thoreau emphasizes contemplation, characteristic of an Indian yogi, as the key with which one realizes how the Divine absorbs the human (Walden). Whitman develops, after the Vedantic doctrine, the concept of 'self' towards discovering the circumference in the 'centre' and 'as the centre.' Prof. V.K. Chari's book "Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism" is a significant contribution to comparative criticism in which Whitman's poetry and philosophy have been discussed in the light of Vedantic doctrine of non-dualism (*advaita*). While tenaciously trying to make a mystical correlation of Whitman's poetic thought and belief with Vedantic philosophy, the author has tended to discover a unifying principle behind the poet's preoccupation with the problem of the 'self.' His objective is obvious from the preface:

> I have attempted in this study to give a consistent account of Whitman's poetic thought and belief, proceeding from the central standpoint of the self in which I have sought to discover the key to Whitman's meanings. (p. xi)

The hypothesis the author has tended to establish is that mysticism constitutes the clue to Whitman's democratic idealism and that his idea of democracy can not be separated from his conception of self-hood, which in fact forms the core of Vedantic mysticism. While so doing, Prof. Chari has thoroughly surveyed Whitman criticism in chapter one ("Introduction: Our Approach to Whitman") right from Thoreau's significant remark that Whitman's poems are 'wonderfully like the Orientals' down to the recent Whitman scholarship of William Norman Guthrie ,Edward Carpenter, Dorothy Mercer, Malcom Cowley, James E .Miller and Gay Wilson Allen. Prof. Allen's precise but thought-provoking foreward to the book under review, testifies to the author's original contribution to comparative Whitman-criticism:

> Before Dr. Chari, the fault with all studies of Whitman's relation to India has been that they were undertaken by occidentals who did not know enough about Vendantic literature. But that deficiency has now been remedied by a very well informed and perceptive Indian scholar, the author of the present

volume. This study has taught me more than all previous writers on the subject. (p. viii)

The above observation points to the fact that occidentals were either inadequate with information or critical of Whitman's first hand knowledge about Vedanta and its influence on him. In his biography of Whitman, Prof. Allen himself suspects "whether Whitman had read any oriental literature." This is a delicate question which "the most diligent search of scholars has not yet determined." (Allen, 1955) On the other hand, Malcolm Cowley ("Introduction," 1959) locates some striking similarities between Indian Tantricism and Whitman's concept of religious democracy on the common ground that everything is full of consciousness which is an all-pervading manifestation of the cosmic energy (shakti) and that spiritual realization consists neither in rigorous asceticism nor in negation of the world but in acceptance of both body and soul. He also doubts whether Whitman read the *Bhagavad Gītā* or Indian philosophy. After the publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, when Thoreau wanted to know whether he knew oriental philosophy , Whitman's answer was in the negative "No: tell me about them." Having said this, and while locating Hindu thought in "Song of Myself," Cowley hazards to guess that Whitman breathed Hindu philosophy either from the transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau or in a state of mystic realization called absorption (*bhāva-samādhi*). However, there are reasons to believe that before the publication of *Leaves of Grass*, *The Gospels of Sri Ramakrishna*, and the lectures of Raja Rammohan Roy on the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta had vibrantly captured the American mind. Romain Rolland observes, in this connection, that the Indian origin behind Whitman's inspiration can be attributed partly to the poet's own subjective realization and partly to the predilections of his background and culture (*Prophets*,1944). Therefore, Whitman might not have missed the opportunity to seize upon Indian thought from them. It is also possible that published four years before *Leaves of Grass* saw the light of the day (1855), the book *The Philosophies of India* (Zimmer, 1851) which accommodates some substantial discussion on 'Sankhya,' 'Brahmanism,' 'Buddhism' and 'Tantra' with the opening chapter under the title 'The Meeting of East and West' might not have been left unnoticed by the American bard of democracy.

Mysticism constitutes the essence of Whitman's poetry, and it is a way of embracing the 'other', of finding the world in the self and as the self, To Whitman, it is a dynamic concept that entails power to enter upon all and that incorporates all into the individual self thereby negating the opposition between 'me' and 'not-me.' This unified point of view achieved in *Leaves of Grass* lends consistency and coherence to Whitman's poetry and philosophy. Prof. Chari has rightly chosen the concept of 'self' as the powerful key to understand Whitman in the light of Vedantic mysticism. No doubt, Whitman was aware of the doctrines of the German transcendentalists like Kant, Schelling and Hegel. But these idealists expounded a theory of consciousness which is essentially dialectical. The western sensibility is as such dialectical or dualistic, and the bi-polar logic of being and becoming,

love and strife, harmony and discord, attraction and repulsion characterizes the occidental sensibility right from the time of Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato down to the times of Kant, Hegel and others. Kant distinguishes understanding from 'reason' in that the former depends on the material of 'senses' for its operation, whereas the latter points to the truth and universal 'power above sense'. The post-Kantian idealistic doctrine of dialecticism tends to unify the opposites by the process of meditation. In Hegal, contradictions are sought to be resolved by synthesizing them into unity. But, in actuality, the contradictions are avoided rather than resolved. The author therefore cogently argues that Whitman's poetry and philosophy are more akin to the Vedantic doctrine of mystical intuition than to the German doctrine of dialecticism . "The whole spirit and formation of Whitman's poetry," Prof. Chari observes, "is opposed to the dialectical principle."(p. 25)

Intuition is knowing by 'being' and it arises by an intimate fusion of the knower and the known, and Whitman's mysticism is grounded upon the principle of intuition—a method that does not synthesize the opposites but annuls them. The idea is admittedly Vedantic, because the Upanishad reads that the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman, and that one can know Brahman only by being Brahman. True knowledge, according to Vedanta and Whitman, is the non-dual knowledge of the real. It is intuitive perception of the fact that self is identical with the Reality . Intuition is knowledge by identity, and intuitive experience involves a form of mergence of the object and the subject, the knower and the known and the act of knowing thereby dissolving dualities . It is a vision of the reality in terms of totality, and the idea is forcefully pronounced in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (II. 4. 3.):

> As a lump of salt in water becomes dissolved in water and there would not be any of it to seize forth as it were , but wherever one may take, it is salty indeed , So, verily , this great being , infinite , limitless , consists of nothing but knowledge. (in Chari, P. 27)

The Upanishad emphasizes the self as the dearest of all things on the ground that it is pure bliss, the origin of happiness. If some one worships Brahman thinking that Brahman is different from his "self", he is not a possessor of true knowledge. The self, according to *Brihadaranyaka* (I. 4.8; IV. 5.6) is dearer to us than a son , dearer than wealth and anything else . One who worships the self alone as dear is a true mystic whose *sādhana* will never perish. There is a direct echo of the Upanishadic idea of self in Whitman:

> From the eye sight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice, proceeds another voice, eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. (Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, 1855)

Whitman also realized that there is a miraculous power above intellect which gives a direct insight into the harmony underlying the world of multiplicities, and that this power is a perception by the soul. The idea is Vedantic, as the *Gītā* speaks of a divinely illumined eye (*divyacakṣu*) and reminds us of the Upanishadic proclamation that seers see only with the eye of enlightenment.(*jñānacakṣu*). Whitman is a Vedantic-mystic in his profound

conviction that truth springs forth out of a region far deeper than either the senses or the intellect. ("Song of Myself," 5; "Of the Terrible doubt of "Appearance," in Calamus).And this corresponds to *Kena Upanishad*'s emphasis on the ineffable efficacy of the Spirit which is distinct from the known and above the unknown, and which, neither the eye nor the speech nor even mind can comprehend. Whitman realizes the oneness of the universe in Vedantic terms and recognizes the absolute being as at once the support and the essence of the world.

What is "over-soul" to Emerson is no other than one's own self to Whitman. Therefore, he celebrates the 'self' ("I Celebrate Myself") not in narrow sense of the term, but as 'All': "I contain multitudes." Like Emerson's 'over-soul,' he conceived the concept of 'Kosmic spirit', 'ensemble' and 'Enmasse'—all of them pointing to a permanent and immutable force that pulsates and rolls through all things:

> "...all spirits throbbing forever, the eternal beats, eternal systol and diastole of life in all thing ("Democratic Vistas")

Duality is also denied in Whitman's poetics in which one marks enactment of the intuitive activity. Whitman envisages the poet as a joiner, a uniter and a 'full grown fellow' who tightly holds the hands of nature and soul, which he will never release "until he reconciles the two" and blends them 'wholly and joyfully' ("Good Bye My Fancy"). Once again it is the self that acts as a fusing tie between art and life, between subject and object .This state of identity is not possible on the basis of dialectics but through intuitive perception and, in poetry, through paradoxical presentation. Prof Chari observes: The paradoxical form is the only way in which the intuition of unitary self can be affirmed (p.35).The emphasis on paradox in Whitman's poetry not only reminds us of Cleanth Brooks' powerful remark that the language of poetry is essentially one of paradox, but also points to the paradoxical use of language in (*Kena Upanishad*, 2.3):

> To whomsoever it is not known, to him it is known, ;to whomsoever it is known, to him it is not known , unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know.

In much the same way, Whitman celebrates paradoxically his self which is the self of all and this shift from 'self' to 'other' is made by an intuitive leap which is also evident in the following: "A shroud I see and I am a shroud / I wrap a body and lie in the coffin" ("The Sleepers", 2). In "Song of Myself (32)," 'I' contains 'multitudes' and 'I' becomes the 'clock' myself ,whereas elsewhere the poet's intuitive mind tends to annihilate all illusory mental barriers that seem to separate the self from the world of objects ("There was a Child Wentforth").At the same time, emphasis is also laid on the poet's cosmic expansion through trials and turmoils, after surmounting which the poet gets a glimpse of the 'kernel 'behind the husk-the first principle. It is at this state that the poet becomes a seer, a knower (*tathagata*), a time binder, complete in himself, a great lover and benefactor of mankind, a true son of God, born to bind Time—past, present and future. The Greatest poet, according to Whitman, is a poet of the cosmos who hardly knows triviality and who embraces humanity in totality. Neither suffering and darkness, nor fear and death can jar

him. He becomes a "Cosmic Man": "The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet". (Preface to *Leaves*). It is in this expansive stage that the poetry and the poem are literally identified. Whitman's aesthetics, apart from his poetry and spiritual philosophy, is also conditioned by the Vadantic concept of unity: "I will not make poems with reference to parts." ("Starting from Paumanok." 12). Even in his preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855), the poet postulates his Vedantic theory of art that art, like life and trees, experiences a natural growth of freedom unhampered by artificial restriction or conventions.

Dynamism is the essence of Whitman's poetic vision and the chapter entitled "Emergent Ego" which comes to a close with the realization of the self leads the poet to an ineffable sense of fruition, fullness and relish- a stage in which dissatisfaction is thrown out in favour of ecstasy (*ānandam*). " I am satisfied"("Song of Myself",3) The poet now feels that he is limitless and the highest stage of self-realization begets self-fulfillment: "I exist as I am; that is enough, I sit content" (Song of Myself 20) The poet-mystic takes delight in his self(*ātma rati*), becomes c ·ntent, experiences union with self and becomes autonomous (*svārt*): "o soul thou pleasest me, I thee" (*Passage to India*, 8). This realization of the real glory of the self logically leads to the expansion of the 'Dynamic Self" (ch.IV) where self knowledge points to the knowledge of the identity of the individual self and opens a career of infinite creative expansion through a centrifugal movement .It is a state of internal dynamism and limitless energy from within that not only finds an outlet in creative activity, but also marks the return of the spirit into the world of dynamic activity. *Leaves of Grass* is the outcome of this creative phase— grown out of an irresistible impulse and cosmic urge from within. Here the creator and the creation, the poet and his poetry become identical:

> Comerado , this is no book/ who touches this touches a man ('so long' in "Song of Parting")

The dramatization of the activity of the dynamic self is further extended in ("The Paradox of Identity" (Ch-V) where the self experiences a centrifugal and centripetal movement through the power of intuition – now going out to negotiate with the cosmic manifold and the next moment with drawing into itself, like the snail hiding itself in the shell. This drama is shown in "I sing the Body Electric" ("Children of Adam") and "Song of Myself" (19) through the idea of sexual union. Chapter –Six ("The Self and Reality") once again recalls the dialectical method of the German idealists who failed to dissolve dualities. By saying that the whole cosmic existence is contained within the self, Whitman comes closer to the metaphysical position of Vedanta. He is a poet for whom the earth is real ('I accept Reality and dare not question it,' Song of Myself, 23). But he denies ultimacy to the world and recognizes the vast spiritual realm which is the 'real real'. Spirituality is the culmination of the world process. In this connection Prof. Chari rightly observes; "Whitman's idealism, as also the Vedantist's is more correctly characterized as mystical or transcendental realism." (p.143) To be precise, Whitman's cosmic consciousness is the consciousness of the self that is the cosmos, the one that is all, the *ātman* , the internal

principle which is also the mighty universal Brahman, complete from all sides and in all aspects. This central thesis that self is the reality and that to be one's self is to establish unity with the all has been established by Prof. Chari with full evidences, assertiveness and confidence that has silenced all suspicion about Whitman's indebtedness to Vedantic thought.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen Davies and Ananta Ch. Sukla, *Art and Essence*, Praeger Publishers, 2003. pp. xix + 253

This is the fourth in a series of volumes being spearheaded by Professor A.C. Sukla. The first two volumes, Art and Representation (Praeger, 2001) , Art and Experience (Praeger, 2003) were edited by him, and a fourth volume Art and Expression, edited by him and Michael Mitias, is in the press. The object of this series is to put together the contributions of contemporary international scholars to the age-old questions relating to the theory of art. This volume, ably introduced by Stephen Davies, deals with perhaps the most vexing of all aesthetic topics, namely, the question of the essence or defining property of art. Is there an underlying nature or defining characteristic to art, understood both as a term in English and as a concept. In other words, is there a common quality shared by all art forms and all instances of what we designate as artworks, such that where it can be identified something could be called art. The discussions included here traverse a whole range of views—from those that deny outright an essence to art to those that allow it a "qualified" essence, or assign to it a historical, functional, or relational determinant, or that offer a synthetic/hybrid definition of art. Traditional theories have worked for long with the concepts of imitation/representation and expression. Or they relied on formal criteria. But contemporary aesthetics has brought these concepts under intense scrutiny and called them into question as defining terms. The two most influential factors in contemporary speculations in aesthetics have been (i) the Wittgensteinian philosophy of language and his theory of family resemblances, arguing against the possibility of definition, and (ii) the emergence of nonart, anti-art, or conceptual art, which presents a stumling block to any definition advanced of art by denying stability to that concept—every example given of art being faced with a counterexample (driftwood or Duchamp's readymades). It is in this climate of opinion that most of the discussions in this volume take place.

There are 13 essays in the volume and they are grouped under four broad headings: theoretical, historical, cross-cultural, and contemporary perspectives. In his Introduction, Davies provides convenient summaries of the chapters, as well as illuminating backgrond information about each of the major perspectives. Some of the contributors, like Davies and Robert Stecker, have already written incisively on the subject.

In Chapter 1, "Essential Distinctions for Art Theorists," Davies makes some valuable points. He argues against the neo-Wittgensteinians, like Weitz, who oppose essentialist definitions, and shows that even artworks grouped together in terms of family resemblances must presuppose a conceptual unity among the objects so grouped. And further, resemblance must imply some perceptual unity in the objects that are said to resemble one another. And to spell out this unity is to propose a kind of definition after all! Davies does not of course say that artworks possess a "real essence" like natural kind objects. But neither do they have purely "nominal" or cultural essences since they answer to widely shared human needs and interests. (They are more like "weeds" than like "gold" or "parking tickets.") For the very reason that it derives directly from innate mechanisms embedded in human nature, art does have an objective nature independent of personal or cultural variations. Aesthetic functions and properties are thus universal in their appeal. Davies, thus, offers a synthesis of the "psychological" and "cultural" theories, in terms of Dickie's classification. He admits, though, that a formal definition of art by necessary and sufficient conditions may not be a wise move. Drawing a distinction between "theorizing" and "defining," he suggests that a theory of art is still a possibility—one that discusses more generally what is typical or normative for works of art. But here one might ask: How can you say what is typical or normative for art without some notion of its central or essential characteristics, which will count as definitional features, and of the concept's extension?

Arguing from the Wittgensteinian position, Graham McFee, in Chapter 2 "Art, Essence, and Wittgenstein," urges that the search for a definition of art, in fact, of any concept, is neither feasible nor philosophically useful or revealing. According to him, neither the "open concept argument" nor the argument based on family resemblances among artworks, rather than a common denominator, which Weitz deployed against the essential definition approach to art, would be the correct characterization of the Wittgensteinian position, although these ideas are rooted in Wittgenstein's writings. Rather, it is that "having a formal definition cannot be a requirement for understanding a concept." "What is understood cannot depend on a definition (or

essence)." (p. 28). The point of Wittgnstein's philosophy of language as use is that words and concepts are understood by the common user, in spite of their vague boundaries, even without analysis and a formal definition of them—simply by their contexts of use, not by searching for the essence of the world behind them. Even like words, such as "meaning" and "value," "art" too requires contextualizing to determine what sense is at issue in a particular instance of use, for the term covers a wide range of uses, including things such as "the womanly art of breastfeeding"—each use calling for a different set of defining properties Therefore, McFee says. "The demand is simply for contextual differentia, not for essences" (p. 33). McFee does not of course deny that artworks could have a bunch of necessary properties in virtue of being artworks. But they cannot serve as defining properties in the sense either that they are exclusive to that class of objects or that wherever they are present, those objects can invariably be identified as art objects. We can generalize about an artwork's essential properties, but without expecting our statements to be exceptionless. "In discussing what is essential for art staus, then, we are not offering specific conditions . . . but a contextual background...."—of the artwork's being the product of a certain period or genre, etc. Further, art status, according to him, is "logically prior to the properties" that artworks qua artworks necessarily have (p. 36).

On this view, it appears that art staus is first granted to certain objects quite arbitrarily, whereas there must be some reasoning, or a "theory," if you will, behind the granting of that status, and this could only be based on a property or a set of properties that an object possesses intrinsically, which gives it the name of art. Then, again, granted that words are always context-specific, yet they do possess core meaning propertes (in some languages, derived from their etymological roots), which then are extended to a range of contexts that bear at least a remote relation to their original senses, thus setting a constraint on the senses in which they can be applied. But according to the Wittgensteinians, laguage use seems to be a blind ritual.

In "Nature, Gardens, Art," Stephanie Ross discusses the distinction between Nature and Art. Art stands in sharp contrast to Nature by being an artifact that is an utterly "shaped" and "bounded" object and by possessing representational and emotional properties, which Nature lacks. Emotional properties may be attributed to Nature only metaphorically and any kind of design that we may see in natural objects is imposed on it. "Art appreciation is one thing, nature appreciation quite another" (p. 42). The Japanese gardens, with their look of natural inevitability, are still art: they "use art to imitate the look of nature" (p. 50). Remarking on the aesthetic properties, discredited by many nowadays, Ross says that a reference to an object's perceptual properties is unavoidable in judging the aesthetic value of that object.

Part II of the book contains three essays spanning the history of aesthetics from antiquity to the 18th century. In "Art and Beauty in Antiquity and Middle Ages," Santaro-Brienza goes over the familiar territory of the theory of mimesis and verisimilitude. A well-known but important implication of this theory is stressed in this connection, namely, that the art-maker doesn't invent new things, but copies a pre-existent order of things. This lesson will often be lost sight of in subsequent eras, but it is this that ensures art's objectivity and sharability. Even medieval aestheticians, like Aquinas, with their transcendental reference, preserved the classical principle of the objectivity of aesthetic perception. Beauty, for Aquinas, was a natural and ontological property. Two other essays, one by Dabney Townsend, "Hume, Kant, and the Essence of Art" and the other by Robert Hicks "Hegel and Nietsche on Life and Dramatic Characters" examine the work of these philosophers to see if they have anything to offer on the problem of the essence of art. They arrive at the conclusion that none of these philosophers provides an account of the nature of art. Neither Kant, with his theory of beauty and aesthetic judgement—which no doubt laid the foundation for modern aesthetics and philosophy of art—nor Hegel and Nietsche, who viewed beauty and art, one as part of his grand metaphysical and world-historical scheme and the other in light of his philosophy of life, offered any definition either of fine art or of the concept of art.

Presenting the Indian views on the problem of definition, Sukla shows, in his essay "Abhinavagupta's Definition of Art: Ontology versus Essentialism" (Part III), that, according to Abhinavagupta, each art form has to be judged on the basis of its medium, the mode of its existence, and the mode in which it is apprehended by the audience. Hence there cannot be an essence common to all art forms—pictorial, verbal, and performing. This is also the impression one gets from the Sanskrit texts on the arts While every text starts with the problem of definition, it confines its discussion to the discipline on hand—poetry, drama, music, or dance—and never ventures to offer a global theory of art per se. The Sukraniti discusses 64 arts, crafts, and sciences, defining the character of each of them, but leaves the general term kala (art) itself undefined, with the remark

that a unified definition of the various arts is not attempted here because the distinction between the arts is born of the different activities involved or the kinds of things done in each.

Sankuka, too, who, in arguing his imitation-cum-inference theory of theatrical experience, introduces the analogy of the "painted horse" (citra-turaga-nyaya), does not attempt anything like a general theory of art. He does not, as Sukla thinks, appear to equate the stage art with the pictorial. He is only comparing the representational illusion of the theatre to the illusion created by a pictorial representation. This is an analogy limited to that one place—ekadesa-anvaya. Even Abhinavagupta allows the primary illusion of the theatre, although, phenomenologically, an illusion is not cognized as such at the moment of perception though it may be sublated at a subsequent moment. Is not Sankuka also saying as much in his analysis of the theatre experience? In speaking of the verbal and the presentational components of the theatre, Abhinavagupta no doubt clearly distiguishes between them and the art of painting in terms both of their ontology and the phenomenology of their perception. But in his commentary on dance and music, which were important adjuncts to Bharata's theatre, there is not much on how these twin arts appear to and are experienced by the audience; their definitions are given largely in terms of their formal, constitutive elements. So it may not be possible to generalize that he defines the various arts in terms of "the phenomenological ontology of each art" (Sukla, p. 122),although a suggestion for that sort of generalization is strongly implied. Again, I wonder if Sukla's division of the Indian theories in terms of relational, functional, and procedural approaches is not too pat. For instance, Sankuka and Bhattanayaka are as much concerned with the functional (and therefore with the phenomenology of the spectator's reception) as with the "relational" (the work's relation to reality, in the sense understood by Sukla). And Abhinavagupta, in spite of his emphasis on the psychology of rasa experience, is equally attentive to the objective or constitutive features of the art forms he comments on. It would therefore be more accurate to characterize his approach as "integrative" in that he, like Bharata and Anandavardhana, pays due attention to all three components of the poetic activity, namely, the end to be achieved, the means of achieving it, and the manner of performance or particulars of the procedure to be adopted (sadhya, sadhana, itikartavyata). Nevertheless, Sukla has done an admirable job of presenting these ancient theories in the vocabulary of modern criticism, thus bringing them closer to the mainstream of Western philosophical aesthetics.

Japanese art-making, according to Yuriko Saito ("Representing the Essence of Objects: Japanese Aesthetics") starts with the transcendental aim of overcoming the self and its intervention in the perception of the true nature of objects. It gives a metaphysical twist to the concept of imitation. The aim of art is still imitation or representation of objects of course, but not of their externals. The artist is asked to intuitively grasp the inner essence or mood of an object of nature and reproduce it in his chosen medium. He thereby achieves a genuine representation with an "over-all effect of artlessness and spontaneity" and with complete "object-centredness," without the interference of the lyrical ego. This idea, as is well known, is at the root of the haiku and the imagist poem. There is, however, something dubious about this account of art creation. For one thing, no material medium, including language, can capture and manifest inner essences except through their external appearance or logical signs. And, for another, it is well-nigh impossible not to project onto the object the perceiver's self—its mood, perspective, or viewpoint. According to the Rasa theory, even an admittedly objective description of a scene or landscape becomes "tinctured" (rusita) at the hands of the poet/artist. Larry Shiner, in his discussion of "Western and Non-Western Concepts of Art," arrives at the conclusion that the concept of art has a cross-cultural essence—there is no culture without art and without some notion of art—and that "cultural authenticity" is not a necessary condition for belonging to the category of art. That is to say that an artifact is recognizable as such by its own tokens, even without a knowledge of its cultural context. The term "artistic authenticity," as opposed to the context-relative cultural authenticity, could only mean the autonomous, meaning the non-relational, and manifest features of the artwork by which it is identified as art.

In "Historical Definitions of Art" (under "Contemporary Perspectives"), Kathleen Stock writes that the primary assumption of historical definitions is that what unifies the concept of art is that artworks stand in some appropriate relation to already established works either in virtue of the artist's intention to situate his work in that relation or in virtue of the artwork's standing in a relation of exemplification, amplification, repudiation, etc. to an established artistic tradition. The first, the author calls the "internalist" position, and the second, "externalist." She rejects both approaches on grounds that artistic intentions cannot be

straightforwardly read off from the manifest properties of an artwork, and that the mere existence of a historical relation to past works is not constitutive of its artistic status. Even identifying narratives, as in the case of avante-garde objects, cannot turn nonartworks into artworks. This might suggest that the best way to identify artworks would be by their manifest properties. But Stock denies this. She says, endorsing the Wittgensteinian account of art, that "it is not the manifest or relational properties on their own that are constitutive of art; it is the recognition by users of the concept that certain manifest or relational properties are significant in particular cases that is constitutive." There are no set of necessary and sufficient conditions; only resemblances to established works (p. 174). This view raises two questions: first, what makes certain objects or artifacts "established works" or what are the criteria for designating them as artworks, unless the designation were purely arbitrary or conventional, like naming persons. Second, if resemblance alone were the criterion governing classification, what should count as the features shared by a present, yet-to-be-named object with an accredited past work, and how should their significance be determined, unless, once again, one has unquestioningly to go by the verdict of the art establishment?

Robert Stecker's "The Ontology of Art Interpretation" is focused on the objects of critical interpretation, art being one of them. It discusses two issues concerning the objects of interpretation: (i) Are the objects of interpretation the sort of things capable of having essential properties? And (ii) the relation between interpretation and its object. Stecker favours what he calls the "contextualist syndrome," according to which the object exists and so its properties, prior to interpretation and independent of any individual interpreter's conception. He joins issue with Margolis who maintains that objects of interpretation lack a "fixed nature" and that their meaning is constructed by the process of interpretation and alters with it (the "constructivist syndrome").Stecker holds that artworks have certain essential properties—structural or historical—on which their identity depends. But he observes that all artworks are not ontologically of one kind and that there is no single sort of thing that all artworks have. Some, like music and literature, are abstract structures or "structures-in-use" and context-sensitive, and they derive their essential properties from art-historical context, whereas others, like painting and sculpture, are physical objects. He calls this "ontological contextualism" or "heteronymous contextualism."

Stecker's conclusion, then, is that an artwork, regarded as an "embodiment" and a token-of-a-type, must possess some properties essential to its being identified as an embodied object and as a token of its kind, but that it is subject to historically grounded changes in structure over time. Hence the criteria for identifying something as art, too, must change from time to time. An artwork is intended to fulfil a function belonging to standard works (central art forms) at a given time. The standard functions include the representational and expressive functions, while some others are accidental and context-dependent.

Stecker's type of "historical functionalism" seeks to strike a blance between several rival theories while rejecting all of them individually—essentialism, anti-essentialism, historicism, institutionalism, intentionalism, simple functionalism, the Wittgensteinian "use" theory, the "cluster concept," etc. He grants that there are central art forms with standard functions and properties, but denies either that they are invariable or that there are a uniform set of properties necessary and sufficient for being art. As he puts it in an earlier work: "Art is not a status bestowed by an authority...." It is rather "a set of evolving practices defined by an evolving set of aims...." The consistency of Stecker's via media approach may be questioned from the essentialist/ objectivist standpoint. First, considering that art objects are identified and their arthood is to be defined in terms of the common properties they possess—intrinsic perceptual properties as well as those that depend on immediate contextual setting—and for which they are valued, rather than by the experience they evoke or by the artist's intentions—which is what Beardsley's type of functionalism ultimately stands for—why not call it an "object-property" approach and why admit the intentional component into the definition? Again, if it is admitted that art serves certain standard functions, why not regard these very well-established functions as definitive of art? For the central art forms themselves could not have been given the status of art unless they fulfilled these functions, even granting that they can be applied to artworks only disjunctively. Then again, if these functions and the formal, structural, or semantic properties from which they are to be deduced are to be become well established, they could not be subject to historically grounded changes. There must be some invariable and unchanging relation between art objects and some at least of their properties, such that it would justify their being classed as art. If, on the other hand, as Stecker holds, functions and their corresponding properties are inconstant and evolving over time, why are they standard or normative for art? Moreover, if

artworks are tokens-of-a-type, and types are eternal, and Stecker would allow this, then, what is typical of the central art forms must consist of those very unchanging and universal characteristics.

"Aesthetification as a Feminist Strategy," by Monique Roelofs, explores the interrelationship between aesthetics and gender politics. She believes that there can be no gender neutral theoretical framework for aesthetics and that aesthetic ends cannot but be gendered. The "aesthetification" that she proposes consists in "a politicized view of aesthetic existence" and, correlatively, an aesthetified view of gendered relational life. Valuable as this contribution may be to feminist studies, it sheds little light on the contentious term "aesthetic": it doesn't take us to the root of the matter. What is "aesthetic"? One may also quarrel with the feminist claim that aesthetic ends are necessarily gendered. If they were, then, by the same logic there should be a white aesthetics, a black aesthetic, and an aesthetic for every ethnic or national group in the world!

An effective answer to aesthetic relativism is provided by Denis Dutton ("Universalism, Evolutionary Psychology, and Aesthetics"). Dutton, like many others in this volume, argues that art and beauty are universal and cross-cultural categories, and that art-making and enjoyment are rooted in man's evolutionary psychology—in our fundamental emotional drives for pleasure, play, sex, and the like, which are not culture-specific or historically relative. Although this study does not directly address the issue of art's essence or differentia, it perhaps provides a firm basis for a theory of art. For no theory of art and aesthetic activity can ignore the fact that art engages our most basic cognitive and emotional capacities. This assumption that art answers to something universal in human nature is taken as axiomatic in Aristotle's Poetics as well as in Bharata's Natyasastra. It is now being confirmed by scholars (if confirmation were needed) with the aid of evolutionary psychology and cognitive sciences. But the findings of these sciences at best provide corroboration to the value and appeal of art. They are not in themselves strictly the business of aesthetics.

The discussions contained in this volume present a variety of alternative approaches, representing different traditions, persuasions, and viewpoints on the subject of art and essence. They do not of course leave us with anything like a definition that those of us who are accustomed to traditional ways of thinking can settle for. The two major aestheticians among the contributors, Davies and Stecker—who sympathize with the essentialist position, albeit in a much qualified way—are inhibited from offering a definition along traditional lines, having to accommodate today's artworld and the many theoretical currents of our age. Davies, on the whole, favours an extrinsic, relational, and "procedural" or artworld-based approach to definition, and Stecker, a partly intrinsic and partly extrinsic approach, in which definitions are guided by our changing concepts of art and classificatory practices. (In fact, recent definitional proposals may be seen as so many manouvres to get around the phenomenon of modern art.) But there are enough insights in these contributions on which to build a workable definition.There is a fair amount of consensus among these on certain elements of art that may be deemed essential for its being art, namely, its artifactuality (with its implication of intentionality or human design and functionality), the universality of its practice and experience, and the functions—representational, expressive, or decorative—which it normally performs in at least the central art forms. Once the term "art" is understood in the light of these, its application to anomalous cases, such as contemporary works, can be treated as an extension of its primary use. Such a definition might smack of being stipulative or legislative. But it must be remembered that the definition of all words is, in the final analysis, arbitrary, and a normal use has to be accepted for all of them. In the case of the central art forms, our norms (which have their roots in elemental human nature and hence are nonrelational and not solely dependent on our classificatory practices) are already established by an overwhelming mass of art tradition across the world, and there is no reason to alter our conception of art whenever a mutation appears on the scene. If, however, one must accord art status to such cases then, it would be easier to find another definition of art, based on another conception of it, than to ask us to alter ours. Whether artworks have hidden essences to be discovered or not, one thing seems fairly certain: It is well-nigh impossible to carry on an intelligent discourse about art, or about anything for that matter, without a definition of one kind or another. Besides, since (at least according to some) words are class names and denote universals of qualities and relations, based on the concept of a common quality—which is especially the case with words that denote directly apprehended, physically instanced particulars—"art" too, being such a word, must designate a characteristic or a set of characteristics that define its class. On this count also a definition of art in terms of its essential characteristic/s seems inescapable.

There is much in this collection of essays that will reward serious study and reflection. We should be indebted

researcher in aesthetics. The resources contained in this volume will make it attractive to students as well as specialists.

V.K. Chari

O'Hara, James. *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996. Pp. 320. US $44.50. ISBN 0-472-10660-0.

In archaic Irish literacy tradition, there are two large collections of orally-transmitted sacred tales of places—antiquarian-didactic tales about noteworthy places—the *Dindshenchas* ("place-lore"), and a curious text called the "Fitness (Correct Explanation) of Names" (*Co?ir Anmann*). They both commemorate repeatable place-events associated with saga heroes, mythical or magical adventures, or prototypical deities, and provide access to a neglected pagan store of toponomics. These "wisdom" stories in prose and verse, filled with word play and paranomasia, explain the origin of prominent Irish names and place names. The early Irish onomastic landscape, reflecting ancient Indo-European modes of thought, finds a delightful though unwitting match in O'Hara's latest book (=O'H.). Both traditions recognize and expose wicked punsters.

Frederick Ahl's brilliant *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Cornell U.P., 1985) anticipates and antecedes this work, and that book's introduction sets the stage most appropriately for the present study:

> Puns [...] deceive because people generally expect language, and indeed nature, not to confront them with doubles. Puns pluralize and destabilize meaning [...] by undermining people's confidence in their own perceptions. Visual or verbal 'puns' amuse the reader or the spectator who takes pleasure in watching someone else's confusion. (Ahl 17)

* * *

An earlier monograph by O'H on Vergil's *Aeneid* (Princeton, 1990) called attention to the twin themes of death and prophecy. His new title derives from *etymos logos*, a "true explanation" or essential feature of a person, place, deity, or thing. For the Ancients, knowing the aetiology (origin) of a name was tantamount to knowing profoundly is *raison d'être*. The author has assembled, in this learned and extremely useful volume, an immense catalogue of serious etymological world play in the works of Vergil. As did the Roman epic poet himself, O'H. draws extensively on the works of Homer, Hesiod, Plato, Varro, Ovid, and Servius, among many others. Of course, the bilingual situation of ancient Rome is a given, and Greek etymologizing runs rampant—just as it does between Latin and the medieval vernaculars.

The work divides into a general overview of etymological practice before Vergil, a survey and analysis of various techniques and features of etymological wordplay (such as paronomasia, allusion, glossing, framing, clustering, vertical juxtaposition, the use of kennings and allusion, etc.), a probing discussion of Vergil's own etymologizing strategies and their function, and then a detailed catalogue (pp. 115-229) of etymological wordplay in the *Aeneid*, the *Eclogues*, and the *Georgics*.

O'H. takes as a starting point the *Cratylus* of Plato, in which Stoic thinking is targeted, epitomized in part in the Pseudo-Augustine *de Dialectica* (or *Principia Dialecticae*), which offers four rules, as it were, of paronomasia (simplified here): similitudo, echoing, change of emphasis of transference, and the use of opposites. Several quick would be examples the collocation of libro and liber, libri; or the correlation of Media and Medea; Latium derived from its anagram maluit (see Ahl. 47); Ascanius' joke about eating their tables involves a pun on mensa, originally a round sacrificial cake..., and so forth.

The grand master of these curious puzzles, Callimachus, composed witty poetry that, writes O'H., "is characterized by attention to geography, ethnography, language, and aetiology, which includes the origins of customs, myths [...], and words and names." (23)

O'H. urges us to accept that Vergil embraced these strategies "... not in order to be pedantic or to contribute to his reader's knowledge of etymologies, but because he saw etymological wordplay as one effective

way of achieving some of the goals of his poems." (103) Apart from the indispensable aesthetic pleasure they reward, and the profound wisdom they impart, learned poetic allusions significantly initialize the text as special and extraordinary non-fictional discourse.

My only reservation bears on a familiarity with Vergil manuscripts. In spite of a disclaimer that he is following Servian tradition, it is surprising to see O'H. begin the Catalogue with the *Aeneid*—which runs counter to hundreds of high medieval manuscripts that always present the *Eclogues* first, then the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid* last (most youthful to most mature work, one presumes).

Carefully indexed, cross-referenced, and heavily annotated, the work will serve as a scholar's resource for years to come. O'H.'s comprehensive introduction on etymologizing both by Vergil and his Alexandrian forerunners helps illuminate the phenomenon in light of the Roman poet's style and authorial presence. He illuminates the allure of this (for me, at least) unpedantic creative-interpretive tendency in terms of Vergil's own poetic agenda. In addition to complementing Irish medieval literary habits, the trend O'H. charts will be useful for medieval scholars as well, who will recognize the similar style of medieval commentaries, which involves a kind of lexico-syntactic associative echoing, at once ornamental and magical, that fits words together that iterate, alliterate or assonate in order to stress the mutual relationship of their nomen and essentia—phenomena seen in texts as diverse as *Beowulf*, Welsh alliterative poetry, the 14th century *Ovide moralise*?, even Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies* (character's names reflect their essence).

O'H. volume thus clarifies the aetiological propensity—highly prized in sophisticated Alexandrian poetry—which itself aimed to understand the present in light of the past.

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Grace M. Ledbetter, *Poetics Before Plato: Interpretation and Authority in Early Greek Theories of Poetry*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 128.

Ledbetter publishes this book after Andrew Ford's Princeton book *The Origins of Criticism* (2002). Ledbetter therefore is unaware of Ford's views regarding the literary culture and poetic theory in classical Greece. In the bibliography Ledbetter mentions Fords' Cornell book *Homer: The Poetry of the Past* (1992). Long ago Rene Wellek distinguished between two major modes of literary criticism—the linguistic mode and the fictional mode. The first mode treats poetry (or literature) as a specific mode (Mukarowsky's defamiliarization) of linguistic use (or expression) and the second mode treats poetry as a form of fiction. The fictional mode obviously presupposes a developed philosophical worldview—views regarding the truth and falsehood in human experience. As it seems, this mode of criticism becomes dominant in Plato with a culminating resolution in Aristotle. The linguistic mode studies poetry as a specific linguistic expression, a specific skill of narration that marries style to content, exhibits harmony, proportion and ornaments in effecting a special emotional and cognitive response to the audience. This is what, Ford thinks, the origin of the way the Greeks appreciated the songs — "a public act of praise or blame upon a performance of song" (p. 3), however inadequate and unsatisfactory the mode may appear to a contemporary scholar or reader. Ford starts with the response of Penelope and Telemachus to the song of Phemius on the return of the Achaeans from Troy as narrated by Homer in the *Odyssey* book I. This response is considered the earliest literary criticism in Greek literature. But *poetics* or poetic theory as a self-conscious discipline offering systematic account of the nature of poetry, Ford asserts, starts with Aristotle. If that is so, then obviously poetics refers to the fictional mode of treating poetry as Aristotle's definition rests on the mimetic mode of literary truth suspending the issue of language to the context of rhetorics. More than a decade before Ford, Lubomir Dolezel considered poetics as a cognitive activity that gathers knowledge about literature, whereas criticism, Dolezel asserts, is not merely blaming or praising literature. It's an oxiological, value-assigning activity which integrates and re-integrates

literary works into the system of a culture. (1990: *Occidental Poetics: Tradition and Progress*). Dolezel further asserts that Aristotle is the founder of the epistemological principles of poetics.

Ledbetter broadness his view of poetics or poetic theory beyond both Dolzel and Ford— "systematic accounts of the nature of poetry in the most scientific terms available" (pp. 4-5)—the view, Ford finds available in the very Greek sources—he *poietike techne*. But Ledbetter thinks, much before Aristotle, not only Plato and Socrates even the poets like Homer, Heriod and Pindar had their poetics or poetic theories (p. 1). He correlates Susan Sontag's approach to art with Homeric Poetics: experience of art is an immediate sensual awareness unalloyed by interpretation (p. 3). But Ledbetter discovers a difference between Homer and Sontag in considering the former as an epistemologist who counts this immediate experience as a cognitive activity whereas the latter considers this experience purely sensual or erotic. Thus poetics as a cognitive science is much older than Aristotle's poetics.

Ledbetter agrees with a large number of critics of classics that "Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* supply Homer's self-conscious reflections about the nature of the poet and poetic discourse by representing their heroes as poet-figures. ...Homer explicitly and repeatedly compares him (Odysseus [as well as Achilles]) to a bard." (p. 2) Ledbetter correlates the readings of Homer by his two great predecessors, Erich Auerbach and C.S. Lewis, for introducing a theoretical perspective of Homer—"pure present" or immediacy of perceptual presentation (not representation) that avoids/evades all interpretation. Although Homer's, as of hesriod and of Pindar, medium of poetics is not a philosophical treatise, but poetry itself, his poetic theory can precisely be put as a discourse that provides a kind of divine knowledge that has the immediacy and plasma of sensory experience. (p. 3) Further, Homer advocates an affective theory of poetry, that is, poetry affects emotionally, as was Odysseus by the song of Demodocus. The Muses are endowed with divine knowledge, and they are therefore invoked by the poets to impart them this knowledge for communicating to the human. So, the poet does not have a direct divine vision; he is rather a medium of communication.

But Hesiod is a naturalist. His skepticism contrasts Homer's supernaturalism (pp. 40 ff.). On the other hand, according to Pindar, poet is an interpreter—"muse, be my oracle, and I shall be your interpreter" (p. 62). Poetry, according to Pindar, interprets for its human audience a divine message that the poet receives as inspiration from the Muse. Whereas Prindar allows only a privileged poet for interpreting the Muse's words, Socrates "provides a method that disciplines interpretation, makes it generally available to poetry's audience, and prevents it from being a mere instrument of the poet's authority.... Socratic poetics serves the more radical goal of denying that poetry's real value stems from something that the poet himself, contributes." (p. 78).

Ledbetter's efforts in elaborating upon the core points of his arguments based on reading and analyzing the original texts are highly successful and exemplary of a genuine scholar. Unlike other scholars, he is not unnecessarily or rather boringly lingering on the technical details. The whole book is distinguished by its lucidity, readability and therefore remarkable for its accessibility to the general readers, apart from being a solid contribution to the specialized area of classical scholarship in literary theory and criticism.

Francis Sparshott, *The Future of Aesthetics,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, pp.173.

The present book is based on the 1996 Professor Gilbert Ryle lecturers established by the philosophy department of Trenrt University in 1977. A reader of the book is immediately attracted by the very content page of the book that arranges, in four chapters, the overlappings of the areas of knowledge that determine the future of aesthetics: I. Aesthetics and the Future of Philosophy, II. Philosophy and the Future of the University. III. The University and the Future of Civilization. IV. Civilization and the Future of Aesthetics. Philosophy, University, Civilization and Aesthetics are interdependent. One's future depends upon the other's future. The insight behind this correlation is most expected from an aristocratic contemporary thinker of Professor Sparshott's status.

Aesthetics as a full-fledged, self-conscious discipline developed in the eighteenth century and has proceeded since then till date through different philosophers and philosophical schools through Kaut. But its origin can be traced as early as in the classical traditions of Plato and Aristotle, in their axiological discourses, where they have discerned six factors that stimulate human action: " One does and chooses things either (i)

because one enjoys them, or (ii). because they confer some advantage on one, or (iii). because they are useful for some purpose, or (iv). because they are good of their kind, or in relation to the situation in hand, or (v). because they are lawful or right, or (vi). because they compel ones admiration, one finds them fine or beautiful." (p.10).

Hedonistic (the pleasant), opportunistic (the profitable). pragmatic, the usefull ethical(moral) (the good), legal (the sight) and appreciative (the beautiful) of the non-utilitarian type (such as appreciation or admiration of beauty) are six factors that determine the value schemes of human life. Among them the last one is the aesthetic one that signifies love for beauty for the sake of beauty itself without any ulterior purpose; and the sense of beauty means a sense of order artistic beauty being to a large extent contextualized. Therefore it is only in the arts that beauty is cultivated, and the immediate value of works of art does lie in their beauty. From the beginning of civilization man has been investing so much of money and attention because he has been realizing the truth that the arts sustain the fabric of society (in which, along with the arts, philosophy also flourish). Aesthetics as a wing of philosophy (Hegel preferred "philosophy of art" to "aesthetics") "results from the confluence of three streams of thought... First is the status of philosophy among values; second is the logic of taste, the nature of the arguments used in literary and art criticism; and third is the part played in the economy of the mind by works of imagination." (p. 5) Although inquiries of very different order, each with its own-dynamic, in practice their necessary relationship "both guarantees aesthetics and the philosophy of art a place in philosophy, and makes the subject abhorrent to tidy-minded philosophers."

In modern times aesthetics evolves in Baumgarten's inquiry as the science of perceptual experience that gains its philosophical status in Kant, and therefore. the future of asthetics and the six value schemes in which beauty finds its determinate meaning, deemly depends on the future of philosophy. (p. 15). Secondly, aesthetics as a full-fledged discipline requires the confluence of three different lines of inquiry as mentioned above. On the other hand philosophy is now a systematic discipline cultivated not in any market (Socrates), nor in any drawing room dialogues (Plato), nor in one's individual intellectual exercise (Aristotle, Kant...), but in the universities—particularly Anglo-American (Ayer, Ryle, Wittgenstein, Russell, Whitehead, Derrida, Rorty....) In the course of this radical changes in the methodology of philosophical discourses, the very concept of philosophy and the natures of its functioning both depend upon the aims and objectives of the academic institutions that handle and patronize them. Subsequently, as these institutions are patronized by the programmes of civilizations, philosophy must accommodate itself to their programmes—political, economical ethnical, social. The age-old foundational queries gave way to the linguistic queries of the analytical school, which again gave way to edifying philosophy diversified now into its various branches of pragmatism, feminism, ethnic, problematic in political. economical. social factors under colonialism. Civilization is an unstable phenomenon. Since economy and administrative control play vital roles in its evolutionary process, nothing definite can be social about the modès of approval to the very concept of beauty and its contextualization in art theories and criticism. The growing branches of applied aesthetics and environmental aesthetics only exemplify the truth of these observations. Philosophy is just a fashion in the contemporary context. "Fashions in philosophy simply change, Quine or Adorno is the colour of the month." (p. 23)

Sparshott sufficiently and systematically substantiates his basic observations that the future of aesthetics depends upon the future of philosophy. its future depending upon University, subsequently the future of University depending upon the nature of civilization. The language of the lectures evince his sincere probe into the problems, and the conclusions are convincing. The book provides an excellent guide for the readers who miss their ways in the bewilderment of ideas and slogans developed and raised during the last few decades. One can now confidently read the various branches of philosophical thinking as related to the arts. art criticism, literary theory as counted under a single and influential rubric "Cultural studies" as demanded and determined by rise and growth of different nationalistic programmes of the contemporary multicultural (?) civilization.

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